

BOY DONALD

AND

HIS HERO



PENN SHIRLEY



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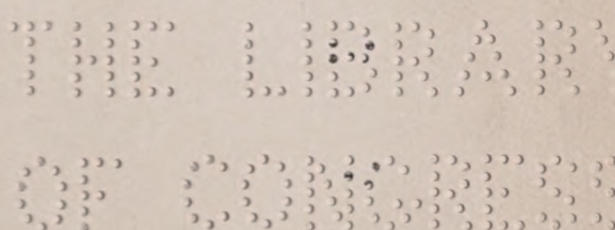
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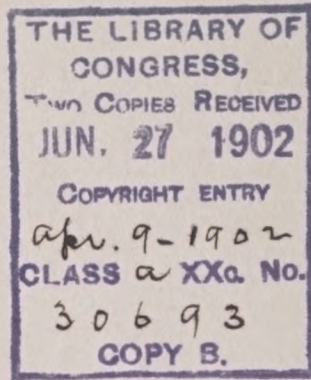
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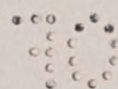
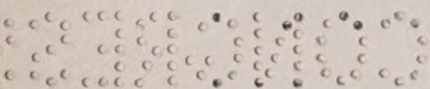
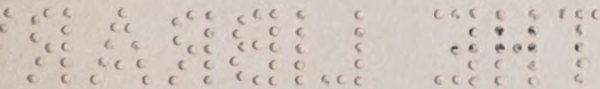
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BOY DONALD AND HIS HERO



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BOY DONALD

CHAPTER I

WHO WAS DONALD'S HERO?

IF you remember happy, golden-haired Boy Donald, you do not need to be told that he was the younger son of Mr. and Mrs. Rowe of Silver Gate City, California, or that he had a well-grown sister Molly, and a smaller sister Louise, better known as "little Miss Weezy." You also must remember Julius Fay, Boy Donald's chum, who lived with his father and mother, his brother George and sister Brenda in a large brown house not far from Mr. Rowe's Queen Anne cottage.

Boy Donald called Julius his "make-believe twin" because their birthdays were on the very

same day of the very same year. But though he loved his little twin dearly he never set him up for a hero, Oh no, not by any means! Boy Donald's hero was three times as old as timid little Julius, and more than three times as wise. To be quite frank with you, he was none other than Kirke Rowe, Donald's dear elder brother.

Kirke came by his title of hero in this way: Molly discovered him in the stable one day mending a top for Donald, and said to him,

"Kirke, you're always doing something for that child. No wonder he adores you."

"Adores me, Molly! What do you mean?"

"O, he thinks there's nobody quite so nice as you are. I overheard him this morning boasting to Captain Bradstreet, about you. Among other things he said that his brother Kirke was as brave as Jack the Giant-Killer!"

"Don is a droll little monkey," chuckled Kirke, well pleased with the young braggart's devotion. "He tags me 'round like a kitten."

"I should say he does," said Molly, pushing in a hairpin about to slip from her auburn braid. "When you are with us he doesn't look at Weezy or me, he sees just you, Sir Knight. O, there's no denying that you are Boy Donald's Hero!"

"Then it's a pity he hadn't a better one," was Kirke's quick retort.

And as he walked off with the mended top in his hand, he added lightly,

"Nobody but Don would ever think of making a hero out of *me*!"

Whether this were true or false the high-sounding name clung to Kirke, and henceforth he was recognized in the family as "Boy Donald's Hero."

Did he deserve the valiant title? But no, do not answer this question at present. There will be time enough after you have grown better acquainted with the lad by reading the chapters that are to follow.

CHAPTER II

MR. AMABEL'S COLT

JULIUS's father owned a beautiful country seat, called Casa de Rosas. This was the winter home for the family, but last winter George Fay had been ill and none of them had been to Casa de Rosas ranch except Mr. Fay himself and Julius, just for a week. Kirke and Donald Rowe and Paul Bradstreet had gone with them; and that was the time when "the twins" got lost in a cañon, and Kirke thought himself to blame and felt very unhappy about it.

Now spring had arrived, and save a few sorry days in which they had been ill with mumps Boy Donald and Julius had played together for the whole happy season.

One pleasant Saturday afternoon as they were flying their new toy balloons from the porch of little Miss Weezy's play-house, called "Weezy Villa," they saw a man driving down the street in a light buckboard, drawn by a lively gray colt. The man was the overseer of Mr. Fay's bee-ranch, Casa de Rosas; and now that the barley-harvest was over he had come to town to make some purchases. The boys recognized him at once and joyfully exclaimed,

"Mr. Amabel's come! Mr. Amabel's come!"

"Of course I've come, youngsters. I should 'a' known that if you hadn't said a word," retorted the jolly overseer, pulling in the reins.

He was a small, wiry individual, with abundant red hair that stood on end like a fox's fur in winter.

"Folks all well?" he went on.

Then without waiting for an answer, "Is your pa at home, Julie?"

"Yes, my papa is at home, Mr. Amabel. See what my papa gave me!" said little Julius, and ran to show his red balloon to the new-comer.

"See what *my* papa gave *me*, Mr. Amabel!" echoed Donald, pattering after Julius with his own balloon of yellow.

The airy playthings, attached to long strings held by the children, danced hither and thither, like huge, bright-colored soapbubbles, and made Mr. Amabel's colt prick up his ears in alarm.

"Don, Julie, come back with those things. You're scaring the horse!" shouted Kirke, starting up from the veranda step where he sat reading the daily newspaper.

He was a second too late. Even as he spoke the frantic colt reared, overturned the buckboard and galloped snorting and plunging down the street.

For a few moments all was confusion. Boy

Donald waved his arms and shouted; Julius fluttered his balloon and cried; Mr. Amabel picked himself out of the gutter and raced after the horse; and Kirke, dropped the *Journal* and raced after Mr. Amabel. Being a famous runner the lad passed the unlucky ranchman at the first crossing, and after a hot pursuit captured the colt and led him back in triumph.

"He goes on three legs, Mr. Amabel. I'm afraid he has sprained his left fore foot," said Kirke.

"He acts that way. I guess we've both got hurt some," responded the ranchman, pressing one hand to his back which still ached from the fall. "I hated to drive the skittish creetur down to the city; but you see I felt obleeged to leave the old horse at home for Manuel."

Manuel was the handsome Spanish boy who formerly had carried about newspapers in Silver Gate City. He was now working on Mr. Fay's ranch, helping Mr. Amabel.

“ But what does Manuel want of the horse there at Casa de Rosas? ”

“ O, Manuel will be off to Annuncio, to be gone a week. You see my folks have got company from that way, and I promised to let Manuel take 'em home next Thursday.”

By “ my folks ” Mr. Amabel meant his wife. He habitually spoke of Mrs. Amabel in the plural number as “ my folks.” There were no children in the household.

“ Yes, I thought in case I shouldn't get home by Thursday and Manuel had to start off before I saw him he'd better travel with the old horse. I couldn't trust him with this young one,” continued Mr. Amabel, twitching at the colt's bridle. “ Come along, pony. No more of your capers. I'm going to take you round to Squire Fay's stable now, and see what can be done for your ankle.”

A great many things were done for the disabled ankle during the next two days; but

though skillfully treated it did not improve; the colt might have to remain in Mr. Fay's stable for two or three weeks.

Meanwhile Mr. Amabel having finished his errands was impatient to return to Casa de Rosas.

"I can't fool round here, Squire, waiting till that creetur is fit to travel," he said to Mr. Fay the Monday evening after the accident. "My folks need me at home."

"But the barley is in. Can't Manuel manage things?" inquired Mr. Fay, who had come out to the stable with Kirke Rowe and Mr. Amabel to see how the colt was faring.

"Yes, Manuel could manage well enough if he was going to be at the ranch, but he ain't," returned the perplexed overseer, running his fingers through his hair which stood up too straight already. "As I was telling Master Kirke, Manuel will be off bright and early Thursday morning to take my folk's relations

to Annuncio. I lotted on getting back that very afternoon at the furthest."

"But Manuel won't be gone long?"

"A matter of a week. He wanted to visit with his mother a spell. She's in the laundry at Annuncio."

"O yes, I've heard she was working there."

"My folks was always kind o' timid about staying alone," continued Mr. Amabel, balancing himself first on his heels, and then on his toes. "And here I can't go home and I can't send word either. Why, Squire, seems if I should fly!"

"The poor man looks like it," mused Kirke, turning to stroke the colt in order to conceal a smile.

"You see, Squire, 'tisin't as if your ranch was on the stage line," Mr. Amabel went on, "or within gun-shot of a railroad."

"Very true, Mr. Amabel. There's no station nearer than Eagle's Crest."

"Just so, Squire. And s'posin' I should take the train here and get off at Eagle's Crest I should have to foot it home a long thirty miles."

"So you would." Mr. Fay knit his brows.

"I could do it easy enough empty-handed, Squire, but how could I make out to tote this honey-separator and all my other parcels?"

"We are going to Eagle's Crest next week—all our family and the Bradstreets too," said Kirke. "I wish it was tomorrow, Mr. Amabel. Then I could drive you across from there to Casa de Rosas and be glad to."

Mr. Amabel shook his head with a jerk. All his motions were quick like those of a squirrel.

"I'm obleeged to you, Master Kirke; but you couldn't hire a team at Eagle's Crest, not if you was to suffer."

"Couldn't hire a team at Eagle's Crest? Why not, Mr. Amabel?"

"Guess you haven't ever put up at the Crest,

have you, Master Kirke?" responded the ranchman drily.

"No, I've never seen the place, Mr. Amabel. Is it so very small?"

"Well, there's the tavern, big as all out doors. No other houses to speak of. No horses neither, exceptin' the landlord's, and he keeps those a purpose to cart round his boarders with."

"What day do you say you and the Bradstreets go to Eagle's Crest, Kirke?" asked Mr. Fay, who had been busily thinking.

"A week from next Thursday."

"Ah? I shall go to Denver and be back by that time," said Mr. Fay.

And after Mr. Amabel had left the stable he added,

"How would you and Paul Bradstreet like to go ahead of the rest of the party? You might take my span tomorrow and drive Mr. Amabel back to Casa de Rosas and stay there a few days."

"O Mr. Fay, I should like it—we should both like it of all things,—but—"

"My coachman wants a vacation; and I've just thought I may as well let him have one while I'm off to Denver to leave George with my aunt."

"Yes, but Mr. Fay—"

"Don't you think you lads could spend a week at the ranch very agreeably, Kirke? You've not forgotten the excellent fishing?"

"Indeed I haven't, Mr. Fay."

"Well, if the plan pleases you, Kirke, I could go by train with your family and the Bradstreets a week from Thursday, and you and Paul could meet me at Eagle's Crest with the span."

"But the Amabels, Mr. Fay. I was wondering if they'd like to have Paul and me so long at the ranch?"

"Is that all your objection? Why, nothing would please them better. They're lonesome

during the summer. They rarely see anybody from the outside world."

"Mr. Amabel would drive, I suppose?" asked Kirke after a pause.

"Not with my consent!" Mr. Fay spoke with a good deal of energy. "I was coming to that presently, Kirke. Mr. Amabel is a capital farmer. He takes excellent care of the bees and of the ranch in general; but he can't control a horse much better than my Julius can. Look at the way he let that colt get the upper hand of him!"

"It did seem sort of queer."

"Decidedly so. Yes, if you boys go with my span I shall have Mr. Amabel fully understand that I expect you to do the driving."

Kirke's brown eyes glowed with gratified pride.

"You and Paul have always been used to horses, and I can trust you with mine, because you don't easily lose your heads. You are

getting to be a reliable boy, Kirke, and Paul is as steady as a mill."

"*Getting to be a reliable boy!*" Alas, Kirke's proud smile was swept away by a hot tide of blushes. He knew only too well what Mr. Fay was thinking of. It must be of that other trip to Casa de Rosas, when he, Kirke Rowe, had not been reliable in taking care of the little boys.

"Catch me letting those kids slip through my fingers another time!" the lad said to himself with a frown. "Catch me again shirking duty! If Mr. Fay'll give me the chance I'll show him that I'm a fellow to be depended upon."

The chance came, and that right speedily. As Kirke hastened away to consult with his father and Captain Bradstreet in regard to the proposed expedition, little did he dream of what the future held in store for him.

CHAPTER III

THE HERO'S TRIALS BEGIN

MR. and Mrs. Rowe and Captain Bradstreet liked the plan suggested by Mr. Fay; but Boy Donald and Julius thought that it might be improved.

When the little boys saw the canvas-covered excursion wagon backed out of the stable on Tuesday morning, and learned that the older lads were to drive Mr. Amabel home to Casa de Rosas, they begged to join the party.

"O please let me and Julie go, mamma," entreated Boy Donald, dancing toward his mother as she entered Mr. Fay's yard.

Mrs. Rowe carried on her arm a traveling-rug that she wished to put into the wagon for



“ O please let me and Julie go, mamma.”

Kirke's comfort at night. She was asking herself if the rug would be warm enough, and did not observe Donald till he cried out again,

"Please let us go, mamma. We won't be a bit of trouble."

"Please let Donny go, Mrs. Woe," begged Julius, at Donald's heels. "My mamma says if you'll let Donny go she'll let me go!"

"Let you go to the ranch again, Julie? Why, haven't you and Donald been there once, only a little while ago?"

"Ye-es; but my mamma says I'm not very well, Mrs. Woe." Little Julius drooped his eyelids plaintively. "My mamma says I must stay outdoors in the fleshy air."

"'Cause his mamma wants him to get fat, mamma," put in breathless Boy Donald. "O may we go to Casy de Rosy, Julie and me? Julie's been orful sick, you know. He's had the mumps, Julie has."

"Yes, I have, Mrs. Woe. I've had lots and

lots of mumps. Choked me too. Made my froat just as sore!"

"Poor little dear, I remember that you were quite ill last month," said Mrs. Rowe, stooping to kiss the pale, eager child. "I remember too what a sweet, patient little boy you were."

Julius was confused by this unexpected praise, and talked on very fast.

"Harry Lane gave me those mumps, that's what my mamma said, Mrs. Woe. Harry'd got froo with those mumps, and then he gave 'em to me."

"When, Julie? What for?" demanded Boy Donald, but without taking his eyes from his mother who had moved away to speak to Mr. Amabel.

Would she let them go to Casa de Rosas? This was the question in which his little lordship was most deeply interested that morning.

"O, I can't 'member, Donny. Harry gave 'em to me 'thout me asking him. I didn't want

'em." Julie also was watching Mrs. Rowe, and added in an excited whisper, "S'pose your mamma'll say yes, Donny?"

"She's seeing 'bout it. I know mamma's seeing 'bout it, Julie," giggled Boy Donald; and ran as fast as he could to overtake his mother. His little chum followed in season to hear Mrs. Rowe say to Mr. Amabel,

"Would it be demanding too much, Mr. Amabel, to ask you to take Julius and my little boy home with you? Do you think Mrs. Amabel would mind boarding them for a few days?"

"King alive, *No!* She'd be tickled to have 'em at the ranch," responded the farmer as he buckled the girth of the nigh horse.

Donald and Julie grinned like two little pussy cats, and hugging each other sidled along to watch Kirke helping with the harnessing.

"We shouldn't wish to overburden Mrs. Amabel," pursued Mrs. Rowe courteously. "If

she will give the children something to eat—We all know what a famous cook Mrs. Amabel is—I am sure Kirke will look after them and keep them out of her way.”

“The little tots won’t worry my folks one mite, Mrs. Rowe. Don’t be concerned about that,” replied Mr. Amabel, hurrying to the stable for a halter.

“Goody, Goody! we’re going to Casy de Rosy,” cried Donald and Julie clapping their hands.

Mrs. Rowe turned to Kirke and said with a smile,

“You would be willing to take charge of the children, wouldn’t you, my dear?”

“Willing, mamma!” Kirke spoke in an agitated voice. “Would *you* be willing to trust me with them again?”

“Most certainly I would, my son.”

“Really, mamma? I shouldn’t think you

would! I've wanted all the time to have them go with us, only I hadn't the courage to say it, because—because—”

“Because of your losing them in the cañon a while ago? Yes, I understand, Kirke. But you'll never be so careless again. You've learned a lesson from that experience.”

“It's a pity if I haven't, mamma!”

“Yes, you'll not let the little boys wander off a second time, I'm confident. I do not hesitate to trust them with you, neither does Mrs. Fay.”

“O thank you, mamma, thank you for saying it,” returned Kirke, fastening a buckle with an unsteady hand. “I was afraid one while that you and papa and the Fays would never have any confidence in me again. And I tell you, mamma, it hurts a fellow to feel that people think he's no good.”

“You're good, Kirke, yes, you are, you're

the goodest boy there is," struck in Boy Donald, to the great displeasure of his jealous little twin.

"No, I'm not good in the least; but bless my little Donny-kin all the same," ejaculated Kirke, patting his little brother on the head. "Look out, sir. Don't hug my knees so hard or you won't leave enough of me to drive you to Casa de Rosas."

Boy Donald hopped up and down shrieking with laughter, as if Kirke had said the funniest thing in the world; and presently began to sing,

"We're going to Casy de Rosy

We're going to Casy de Ro-o-sy."

"If papa approves, darling, we haven't asked papa's consent yet, you know," remarked Mrs. Rowe gently. "Of course you can't go unless your papa is willing."

"'Course not, mamma," said Boy Donald; but he did not cease smiling. He had not lived over five years in the Rowe family without

learning that when mamma was willing that the children should do a thing then papa was willing, and when papa was willing mamma was willing too.

So it was in the happiest of moods that the child frisked home hand in hand with Julius, and popped his sunny head in at the screen-porch in search of the Chinese cook.

"Hop Kee! Hop Kee!" he called shrilly, holding the door ajar.

"Ko yeen si, (go inside)" cried Hop Kee, hastening in from the back yard, where he had been hanging out his dish towels to dry.

He was a tidy Chinaman; it annoyed him to have flies let into his kitchen. When he had shuffled across the threshold in his droll pointed shoes and carefully closed the door, he said to the children,

"Chin chin," which they knew meant "Good day."

"O Hop Kee, we're going to Mr. Fay's ranch if papa 'proves," panted Boy Donald.

"What you speakee?" exclaimed the Chinaman greatly surprised. He had been in America long enough to pick up considerable English.

"We're going to the ranch where we went the other time, you know, Hop Kee."

"Allee?"

"No, only but just me and Kirke and Julie. And O Hop Kee, won't you give us a luncheon, please? Some of those nice cakes you made, those big cookies with raisins in?"

"Give us six, please," interrupted Julius, who had a "sweet tooth."

"Sik cakee?"

Hop Kee began to count on his fingers in Chinese,

"Wun, tu, te-la, faw, fie, sik. Yah," he nodded. "I give you sik velly big cakee."

And he walked toward the pantry, the end

of his long cue whipping the calves of his legs at every step.

"O, thank you, Hop Kee, thank you ever so much," cried the delighted little boys following and dancing about the "celestial" as he dropped the cakes into a paper bag.

"I like you, Hop Kee," added Boy Donald, resting his plump red cheek for a moment against the cook's clean blue frock, "I like you orfly. I don't care if your face is yellow."

The Chinaman grinned as if he had received a compliment. But as his little visitors scampered off with the bag he looked grave and muttered to himself,

"What for takee lile boys that side?" He was afraid that the children might be lost on this journey as they had been lost on the previous one. How could he or any one else predict what was really about to happen?

CHAPTER IV

DRIVING A SPAN

A HALF hour later the great canvas-covered wagon rumbled out of Mr. Fay's stable-yard and halted before Mr. Rowe's house to take in Kirke and Boy Donald. All the others of the family were on the veranda, and every one seemed to be speaking at the same time.

"Remember, Kirke, to hold a tight rein in going down the hills," Mr. Rowe was saying.

"Don't fail to meet us all at Eagle's Crest, Kirke, a week from next Thursday," cried Molly; while little Miss Weezy said to Boy Donald with a kiss,

"You won't forget to bring some acorns, Donny dear, will you?"

Mrs. Rowe's last words to Kirke were these,

"You know you are to be responsible for the little boys, my son. Your father and I entrust them to your care."

Ah, little did Mr. and Mrs. Rowe or the Fays imagine on that bright Tuesday morning how heavy this responsibility would prove! As little did Kirke imagine it, when he answered cheerily,

"All right; mamma. Don't worry. I'll bring the kids to Eagle's Crest right side up to meet you!"

At a bound he had mounted to the driver's seat beside Julius; and his mother thought with secret pride how agile he was; how handsome too, with his clear brown complexion and fine dark eyes, now sparkling with the excitement of the moment.

"Sit wiv me, Donny," cried Julius, hitching along to leave room for his little chum between himself and Kirke.

Donald was no sooner seated than Paul Brad-

street rushed, gripsack in hand, from his home over the way, exclaiming,

“I hope I haven’t kept you all waiting.”

“No, you’re on time, but you must take a back seat,” said Mr. Amabel, with a sportive glance at the complacent little boys in front.

“That’s all right. I’d as lief sit in one place as another, only give me room enough for my legs,” returned Paul, laughing; and ducking his head to avoid hitting the roof of the wagon, he climbed up beside Mr. Amabel.

The awkward, overgrown lad was invariably kind and obliging. Pauline declared that this was one reason why everybody liked him. —You remember Pauline Bradstreet, do you not, Paul’s twin-sister, who was as dark as her brother was light, and who playfully insisted that she and Paul ought to be called “the black and white twins?”

The lively girl stood now at her chamber window across the street, fluttering her pocket

handkerchief and shouting in a merry voice, "Good-by, my better half!"—this to Paul. "Good-by, Kirke. Have a lovely time and tell me everything you do. We'll meet at Eagle's Crest."

"We will, Polly. Good-by! Good-by all till a week from Thursday," cried Kirke, as he gathered up the reins.

Away dashed the horses, away lumbered the wagon; and our five travelers were at last fairly off for Casa de Rosas. They expected to camp two nights by the roadside and arrive at the ranch early in the afternoon of the following Thursday.

"We're going to get out when we come to the snagery, Donny," whispered Julius, nudging his little friend, "I heard Mr. Amabel say so."

"What's the snagery, Julie?" whispered Boy Donald in return.

"O, it's the place where they keep the snags."

"*Snags?* What *are* snags?"

Donald's face looked as blank as a rubber ball.

"Why, don't you know, Donny Woe? They are cold things what go creep, creep. They're alive. Folks eat 'em."

"Eat 'em alive? O Julie Fay, *what folks!*"

"I didn't say folks ate 'em alive. I never said it, Donny Woe! They cook 'em 'fore they eat 'em. The snaggerly man told Mr. Amabel, I heard him."

"Cook 'em, Julie, cook 'em in a dish?"

"I don't know, the snaggerly man didn't *say* dish. He only but just said he boiled the snags in milk."

"*How* funny, Julie!"

Boy Donald was very curious to see these strange objects; and when they had driven along a little further asked anxiously,

"Where's the snaggerly, Kirke? Are we 'most to the snaggerly?"

“‘The *Snaggery*’ Don?”

Kirke looked puzzled; then added with a smile,

“O, I guess you mean the *Snailery*. How is it, Mr. Amabel? Are we pretty near that snailery?”

“Quite near. It’s on the ranch over yonder where you see the derrick.”

On dismounting at the ranch and entering the gate, the travelers observed, beside the path leading to the house, a broad, unsightly pool.

“Where does all the water come from to fill this pool, Mr. Amabel?” asked Kirke in surprise.

“From that well there,” answered the farmer, and pointed to the mouth of an iron tube a little below the surface of the pool. This tube was only nine inches in diameter.

“It’s a teenty bit of a well,” said Boy Donald.

“Yes, it was started for an oil well,” ex-

plained Mr. Amabel. "Mr. Dulac bored for oil and struck it; but it didn't flow fast enough to suit him; so, fool-like, he kept on boring till he'd cut clean through the rock and come to water. There's the trouble."

"What a pity!" said Paul. "How far does the tube go down into the earth?"

"A quarter of a mile."

"Why, Mr. Amabel!"

"Yes, a quarter of a mile. And the well ain't worth a sixpence after all; for don't you see, the oil spoils the water, and the water spoils the oil."

"Whew!" sniffed Donald, "The oil smells horrid. How did it get in?"

"Some folks is of the opinion that the oil comes from fish," replied Mr. Amabel with an important air.

"Why-ee!" Boy Donald wondered how fish could put oil into a well.

"There are folks that pretend to say the

Pacific ocean used to be under here, and some way or 'nother it dried up, and then the fish died and turned into oil."

"Ho, I think that's a silly story, Mr. Amabel," exclaimed Donald bluntly.

"Nevertheless, Don, a great many wise people believe it is true," said Kirke, walking on with his little brother toward the house.

"Do *you* believe it is true, Kirke?"

"Yes, Don. I think it may be true."

"Do you? O, then I guess it is," said Donald, his doubts vanishing on the instant.

And Paul afterward overheard him confiding to Julius that Kirke knew ever and ever so much, almost as much as the minister.

"S'pose that's the snailery man?" asked Donald presently, as a dark-skinned little Frenchman advanced from the doorway to meet them.

Mr. Amabel replied for Kirke.

"Yes, that is Mr. Dulac," and went for-

ward to shake hands with the gentleman, who greeted them all politely, but in broken English, which the little folks could hardly understand.

“Doesn’t he talk funny, Julie?” whispered Donald, frisking off with his little comrade at the heels of the amusing stranger. “I s’pect he’s kind o’ crazy.”

Mr. Dulac was proud to show the snails to his visitors, and smiled a great deal, and made many motions with his hands as he led the way to his snailery in an old windmill.

From his manner the children thought that they were about to behold something very wonderful; and when he ushered them into an eight-sided room with nothing in it to be seen they were bitterly disappointed.

All around the room, excepting on the side through which they had come in, ran a narrow platform having seven little trap-doors. The

little boys did not notice these doors till Mr. Dulac raised one of them and beckoned to Donald to look inside, saying,

“*Les voici!*” (Here they are!)

“I don’t see anything only just dirt,” said Donald, peering into the gloomy space.

“And some cabbage leaves,” added Julius, peering in his turn.

“O yes, and some brown things crawling over the cabbage leaves!” cried Boy Donald, now seeing more clearly. “Sticky brown things, with shells on.”

“Those are the snails their own selves, don’t you s’pect, Donny?” commented wise little Julius. “Folks eat ’em, I told you.”

“I don’t believe they do, Julie. I don’t believe anybody eats such things, ’thout Indians do!”

“Hush, Don, you’ll hurt Mr. Dulac’s feelings,” cautioned Kirke in his little brother’s

ear. "Mr. Dulac eats these snails himself and thinks they are very nice. He sells them too for other people to eat."

Donald made no reply. He did not speak another word till they were both in the wagon again and had driven some distance. Then he said with a deep sigh "'Fore I'd eat *sna-ils!* I think Mr. Dulac is a very queer man!"

The travelers halted for the night by the roadside under some fine live oaks bordering a spring of clear water.

"If you'll make the camp-fire, boys, I'll stake out the horses," said Mr. Amabel, descending rather clumsily from the wagon. "Beats all how riding cramps me since I got hurt! I'm stiffer'n a jumpin'-jack."

"Maybe a bright warm blaze will limber you a little, Mr. Amabel," returned Paul, extending a helping hand. "It's amazing how cold the evenings are!"

And with a benevolent smile the boyish blond

giant walked off to collect materials for the camp-fire.

“We’d better build it in front of that rock, Paul; don’t you think so?” said Kirke, hurrying after, and calling attention to a huge boulder within easy distance.

“To be sure, it’s a fireplace ready-made for us. Don, will you and Julie gather a few leaves and sticks to start the fire?”

“May I kindle the fire, Paul?” bargained Boy Donald, skipping close behind, with his never-absent twin, “May I blaze the match my own self?”

Paul nodded indulgently; and after the little boys had heaped a small pile of brush before the rock, gave the child the match he had asked for.

Donald scratched the point of this along the sole of his upturned boot, as he had often seen men do. He scratched it again and again, but could not succeed in lighting it.

"You don't know how to strike a match, Donny, let me strike it myself," cried Julius, his fingers fairly itching for the task.

"Yes, I do know how, Julie!" retorted Donald, breaking the match in trying to prove his knowledge. "I do know how to strike it. But look a' there, this match isn't good. There isn't any *whetstone* on it."

"*Brimstone* you mean, don't you, Don?" grinned Paul, drawing a second match from their small supply and handing it to the little fireman. "Here, see if there's any brimstone on this one. But don't break it, it's precious."

"Is it? I didn't s'pose brimstone was a precious stone," said Donald innocently. Only the other day his mother had told him the names of some of the precious stones. Was brimstone one of them? Donald could not remember; he was too much engrossed in rubbing the second match.

This lighted with a flash and a fizz entirely

satisfactory to him; and he lost no time in setting the gathered leaves and fagots ablaze.

Then the large boys made haste to drive two crotched sticks into the ground, one on either side of the fire, and to lay a green pole across from one to the other. They called this "hanging the crane."

Next they took from the wagon an iron kettle, filled it with water from the spring and hung it on the pole over the flames.

Pretty soon the water boiled and Kirke made chocolate, prepared with condensed milk, and treated all the company except Mr. Amabel, who presently appeared flourishing a snub-nosed teapot, which he had brought along expressly for his own use. "You couldn't pour any chocolate down *his* throat," he said. "He'd as soon swallow thin mud! Tea was what he liked; and he liked it strong enough to bear up a cat."

When Mr. Amabel talked in this way the

children could not understand him much better than they had understood the Frenchman; but they laughed because the older boys did.

The campers had a nice supper of cold chicken, buttered tea biscuits, frosted cake and fruit, not to mention Hop Kee's addition to the luncheon.

After they had eaten they sat a long time chatting before the fire. Mr. Amabel was in a genial mood and entertained the small boys with stories of his childhood in Vermont. Boy Donald was particularly interested in his account of two little truant pigs.

But that must wait for the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE BRIGHT LITTLE PIGS

“THEM little pigs was just five weeks old when pa bought 'em,” said Mr. Amabel, raking his coarse red hair with his fingers. “Yes, just five weeks old to a day. They was raised across the river from our farm. We lived then on the Onion.”

“On the Onion *river*, Don,” explained Kirke, noting his little brother's perplexity.

“As I was saying,” went on Mr. Amabel, raking his hair again, “Those pigs was raised at Mr. Hunt's farm across the river from ours; but in order to get 'em home pa had to travel something like four miles. He had to drive two miles up the river to the ferry, then cross the ferry and drive two miles down.

“Well, he took me along that day,—I was a little shaver, about as big as one of you little boys,—and he carried an old meal-bag to fetch back the pigs in. I can seem to see that sty of Hunt’s now. There was eight little pigs in it. Six pure white, and two pretty well spotted with black. I teased pa to buy the speckledy ones; and just to please me he took ’em—just them two.

“King alive! How those little fellers did squeal when pa tied ’em into that bag! You’d ’a’ thought from their talk that pa was scalp-ing of ’em!

“Well, we brought ’em home under the wagon seat, covered up, head and ears; and they never seen another streak of daylight till pa untied the bag and let ’em out in our pen. This must ha’ been somwhers toward sundown, for I remember pa milked before long, and poured some warm milk into the pigs’ trough for their supper.

“They seemed all snug and comfortable when he left ’em that night; but when he went out to feed ’em next morning where was they? The little scamps wa’n’t there!”

“Why-ee!” breathed Donald, who had not missed a single word of the story.

“No, the little scamps wasn’t to be seen,” repeated Mr. Amabel. “They had been and dug a hole, if you’ll believe it, under the pigsty fence and made off, root and branch!”

“Did they run away?” inquired Donald.

“I should say they did! Pa had all hands out hunting for ’em the bigger part of the day; but it wasn’t any use,—they was clean gone.

“So, come sunrise, he hitched up Old Sukey again and drove ’way back to the Hunt place to buy another couple of pigs.”

“And did he buy them?” asked Boy Donald, as Mr. Amabel paused to replenish the fire.

“No, he didn’t. And that’s where the joke comes in!”

The ranchman raked together the brands and heaped dry branches upon them before he continued.

"Pa didn't have to buy any more pigs, because he found his own, the little spotted ones."

"O how nice!" interrupted Boy Donald, clutching his small twin's elbow. "Did you hear that Julie? Mr. Amabel's papa found his two little pigs."

"Yes, 'course I heard," replied Julie rubbing his arm. "Where were they, Mr. Amabel?"

"There at Mr. Hunt's in the pen they'd been taken from the day before!"

"Why-ee! How did they get there?" asked Donald.

"No wonder you ask! Well, they swum across the river, those knowin' little creeters, and made straight for their own sty."

"They did? Who saw 'em?"

"Mr. Hunt saw 'em with his own eyes. He

happened to be on the riverbank when they scrambled out of the water. Pretty tuckered they were, Hunt said, and glad enough to be shut up in the pen, with the other little porkers."

"What a plucky little couple!" said Kirke. "Didn't it seem almost too bad, Mr. Amabel, to carry them away again from their brothers and sisters?"

"That's so. But it didn't worry me any then. You never saw a prouder little chap than I was when father'n I drove off home the second time with those pigs under the seat.

"Marm was standin' on the back door step as we turned into the yard; and I remember I clapped my hands and hollered out, 'We've found 'em, marm, we've found the pigs!'

"But they say pride goes before a fall. You may depend pa and I felt consider'ble flat when marm said,

"Then why didn't you fetch the pigs home

with you?" and we looked and saw they wasn't in the wagon!

"Upon that pa whipped up and galloped the horse back about a mile, till going down Cooper's Hill we came to them pigs cuddled down in the bag in the middle of the road!

"'Twas a pesky steep hill, and they'd slid out, I s'pose goin' up."

"Did it kill 'em?" asked Donald.

"Kill 'em? No, their fat saved 'em. When pa dumped them back into our sty they skipped round as lively as grass'pers."

"That's a nice story, Mr. Amabel," said Donald, drawing a long breath. "Please tell another one."

"Not to-night," responded the ranchman yawning. "Don't you see that Julius is fast asleep in Paul's lap? He can't keep awake in the dark the way my folks' monkey-faced owl can!"

“ O, I *wish* you'd tell me about the owl, Mr. Amabel! ”

But Mr. Amabel shook his head.

“ You can see the owl when we get to Casa de Rosas, young man, and that'll be better than hearing about it,” he said, rising rather stiffly from the ground. “ Now I move that we all ‘ turn in. ’ ”

In making this motion the ranchman was wiser than he knew; for surely the campers would need a long night's rest to prepare them for the unforeseen events of the morrow.

CHAPTER VI

SMOKE IN THE AIR

By the morning of the third day the little boys had become fatigued and impatient to reach the end of their journey. When Kirke drove, Julius would take short naps with his head resting on Paul's shoulder; and when Paul drove, Boy Donald would snuggle against Kirke and remain for minutes without speaking. Once in the very act of listening to Mr. Amabel's account of catching the monkey-faced owl and shutting it in a cage Donald himself went nodding off to dreamland.

It was afternoon and the child had slept some time, when Kirke touched him under the chin and cried cheerily, "Open your peepers, you little lazy-bones! We are going up the

long hill now. From the top of it if you look sharp you can see the ranch."

"Donny, Donny, wake up!" shouted Julius, facing about from the driver's seat where he had been asleep himself not so very long before. "Stop a-snoring! Don't you know we're most to my papa's de Rosy house?"

Donald struggled to a sitting posture, his eyelids fluttering like a humming-bird's wings.

"I wasn't a-snoring, Julie!" he cried, deeply wounded. "If I *was* a-snoring, I guess I should 'a' heard it, so now!"

"O Donny Woe, you *was* a-snoring. Yes, you was! You was a-snoring like an effelant!"

Julius had never heard an elephant snore, but fancied that it must make a loud noise—as to tell the truth Donald had done.

"Come, come, boykins, stop that foolishness," interrupted Kirke hastily. "Here we are at the top of the hill; and the one that sees Casa de Rosas first shall have a nickel."

"I can't see a thing," responded Donald, after one quick glance at the hazy landscape.

"I can't too," said Julius, on tiptoe upon the front seat with his arm around Paul's neck in order to keep himself from falling. "There isn't any sun, and it's all black and blue over in the cañon."

"So it is, Julie, just as if a cloud had fell down."

Kirke and Paul smiled at this suggestion of Donald's; but Mr. Amabel's face was very serious. It had worn an anxious look all that day.

"There's too much smoke over yonder to suit me," he said sniffing the air. "Smells to me's if there was a big fire up back in the cañon."

"I've smelled smoke a long while," remarked Paul, half smothered by the embrace of Julius. "I don't see any blaze though. The fire must be a good way off."

"Yes, it's a good ways off now," muttered

the farmer into his beard; "but it can run two-forty when it has a high wind like this a-pushing of it."

"I hadn't thought of it before; but the wind does blow harder than it did at noon," said Kirke, and glanced tenderly down upon his little brother, "Don, stand up, please, and have on your jacket."

"Who made that fire, Kirke, do you s'pose?" asked Donald, wriggling into the garment. "I guess the man's cooking a pretty big dinner."

"It was some idiot of a hunter that set the fire most likely," scolded Mr. Amabel. "Some o' those fellows haven't sprawl enough to get out of their own way. When they break camp they won't even take the trouble to put out their fires."

"That's mean of them," said Kirke, "especially now that everything is so dry."

"Yes, everything is as dry as tinder. The underbrush will burn like so much tow; and

after a fire once gets to spreading who's a-goin' to stop it? "

" My bruvver can stop it, Mr. Amabel," cried Donald, on his feet again in an instant. " My bruvver Kirke can put out fires, I've seen him my own self! "

" Easy, Don, easy! You're giving me more soft soap than belongs to me," protested Kirke; but when the others were not observing he could not help hugging his faithful little worshipper. If he had not been touched by the child's ardent devotion to himself, Kirke must have been a hard-hearted, ungrateful creature.

Though the dust was constantly blown about them like a thick veil, Donald had never ceased to watch the horizon for the first glimpse of the ranch.

Presently he started from Kirke's arms with the eager cry,

" There it is! I can see it! I can see Casa de Rosy! "

And with his chubby, tanned forefinger he pointed to the dim outlines of a house in the distance.

"Bravo, Don, you've earned the nickel," said Kirke handing him a bright five cent piece.

Then turning to Julius,

"Do you feel very bad, Julius because this money goes to Don and not to you."

"No, course I don't," answered Julius contentedly.

"That's a nice boy, Julius, a tip top boy," struck in Mr. Amabel in a hearty tone.

"'Cause Donny'll give me half, Mr. Amabel. Donny always gives me half of things."

"'Cause Julie and I are twins, you know," explained Donald.

"You and Julius are twins, Don? How long since?" queried the farmer, rather mystified by this announcement. He had never happened to hear of the little boys' original notion that since they were born on the self-same day of

the self-same year, therefore they must be twins.

Donald was astonished at the man's ignorance, and hastened to inform him.

"Why, Julie and me, we've been twins, Mr. Amabel, ever since we were made! We didn't find it out at first though."

"No, we didn't find it out, Mr. Amabel, till we were half after four," interrupted listening Julius.

"Ah, you don't tell me so!" Mr. Amabel's china-blue eyes twinkled as he lifted his hat and ran his fingers through his hair. "And how old are you now, Julius?"

"'Most a quarter after five,—*bof* of us!" replied Julius.

He was resting his chin on the back of the front seat, and as he spoke the motion of the wagon shook his head up and down.

"We're '*most* a quarter after five, Donny

and me are,—bof of us, you know. Only Donny is the biggest. I can't grow fast like Donny does, mamma says, 'cause I've been awful sick!"

"I've been awful sick, too, Mr. Amabel," threw in Donald quickly. "I've had the mumps."

"Ho, Donny, you didn't have only but just half the mumps. You didn't have the mumps only but just on one side."

"I don't care, Julie, I—"

"And I had 'em on bof sides, Donny Woe. You may ask my mamma!"

"Well, I had the *measles* on both sides, anyhow. On my stomach, too," retorted Boy Donald with increasing excitement. "And you never had a measles, Julie Fay, you know you never did. You never had a single measles."

"S'posing I didn't, Donny Woe!"

Julie's lip quivered. "Didn't I have the

chicken pox last winter all over me,—inside of me, too? And you never had a single chicken—”

“Whoa!” called out Paul at this critical moment. “Whoa, I say!”

He was speaking to the horses, but his voice interrupted the children’s quarrel in the very nick of time.

Fortunately the quarrel,—a very slight one,—was never resumed; for when Julius and Donald saw the wagon stop at the gate opening upon the ranch and knew that they had come unawares to the end of their journey they squeezed each other’s hands in great delight and shouted together,

“Goody! Goody! We’re here! We’re here at Casy de Rosy!”

CHAPTER VII

CASA DE ROSAS

CASA DE ROSAS was a large one-story house, surrounded by verandas like an Indian bungalow. The verandas were shaded by climbing rose-bushes which sprawled over the roof of the building and even clutched at the chimneys.

At one side of the house stood a barn and a windmill; and farther on hundreds and hundreds of bee-hives. At the other side was the grassy cañon, now hazy with smoke from the distant fire. Between the house and the cañon extended a broad field of barley stubble.

As our travelers drove toward the dwelling Mr. Amabel looked anxiously at the field.

"If the fire should catch in that dry stubble it would run along to the cottage as quick as a cat can lick her eye, boys! But we'll hope for the best."

"Mrs. Amabel sees us," exclaimed Kirke. "She's coming to meet us."

At sight of the portly, smiling woman emerging from the doorway with a whisk broom in her hand, the ranchman's long face broadened, and he remarked demurely to the wagon-load in general,

"It's no easy matter to steal a march on my folks. They're sure to be spying out for me."

"Well, I *am* glad to see you, every blessed one of you!" was Mrs. Amabel's cordial greeting. "Manuel started off at sunrise to take home my nephew and his wife; and I've been so lonesome since they went away that I haven't known what to do with myself."

"I hope we shan't make you too much trouble, Mrs. Amabel," said Kirke politely,

after she had been told the reason of their coming.

By this time the five new-comers had alighted upon the wide piazza.

"I like a houseful of people. It has been dull here lately, with only husband and Manuel Carillo to speak to," replied Mrs. Amabel with an arch glance at Mr. Amabel.

"I've felt sort of creepy today, Rufus, about this smoke," she continued, brushing the back of Mr. Amabel's coat, and then wheeling him around to brush the front. "I've thought what *should* I do if the fire should spread as far as our place?"

"Nonsense, Susan! Don't you worry a mite," responded her husband briskly. "I guess the wind'll change before long."

"Seems to me it *has* gone down a little," said Kirke to whom Mrs. Amabel came next with her broom. "The air doesn't look quite so full of cobwebs."

The word "cobwebs" reminded Boy Donald to ask Mrs. Amabel if she had saved a certain spider's nest for himself and Julius.

"What spider's nest, dear?"

"Why, that spider-that-lives-in-the-ground's nest, Mrs. Amabel. O, don't you 'member it? Mr. Amabel gave it to us, and we forgot to carry it home."

"No, I don't remember it, Donny."

Kirke having walked away well brushed, Mrs. Amabel was now sweeping clouds of dust from her little questioner's jacket. "What does the spider's nest look like?"

"Why, it's a little round hole, as deep as this, Mrs. Amabel. See!" Donald stretched his short arms as far apart as they would go. "Mr. Amabel dug it up for us with a spade."

"It's an ever-so-long hole, Mrs. Amabel," put in Julius. "Has a cunning little speck of a cover to it, a cover you can lift and wiggle-waggle this way." The child twitched the flap

of his pocket up and down with his finger. "Only when the spider is at home he hangs on to the cover, papa says, and keeps it shut."

At this point Mr. Amabel recollected having stored a trap-door spider's nest in the windmill. He promised to find it for the children after dinner, but said he doubted if Kirke would be willing to let Donald take it to Silver Gate City, because the nest was so large.

"O, my Kirke'll be willing, Mr. Amabel, I know he'll be willing," exclaimed Boy Donald. "Kirke's most always willing to let me do things, except—" The honest little fellow dropped his eyes,—"'cept he isn't willing to let me have *tantrums*."

"I want to know! That's very clever of him," said Mr. Amabel, running his fingers through his hair.

And, with an amused glance at his wife, he followed Paul Bradstreet to the barn, where Kirke already was taking out the horses.

The little boys lingered behind to visit the great monkey-faced owl, captured by Mr. Amabel one sunny morning in an old sycamore tree. They found the strange, droll bird in a wooden cage on the back porch, winking its round, staring eyes in the wisest manner.

The truth was that it was nearly blind by daylight; but the children did not know this, and became quite vexed because they could not make the owl look at them.

“His face is funny, but I think he’s awful stupid,” remarked Julius to Donny, when they were sent presently to call Mr. Amabel and the boys to dinner.

“So do I,” said Boy Donald. “I thought he’d say ‘Too whit, too whit, too whoo,’ but he doesn’t say a word. He isn’t half as bright as Molly’s parrot.”

Dinner was served in the kitchen, as the dining-room was set apart for the use of the

Fays, and never occupied except while that family were living at the ranch.

"My folks are always ahead of time," Mr. Amabel observed sportively to Paul as they sat down to the table. "They haven't a lazy bone in 'em."

"I don't know where I could pick up a lazy bone, Rufus," retorted his wife with a gratified smile. "I couldn't borrow one of you, that's certain."

"I've got a *crazy* bone, Mr. Amabel," volunteered Boy Donald, crooking his little elbow, "my mamma says it's crazy."

"Is that so, my little man, I advise you to look out for it," smiled Mr. Amabel, beginning to carve the baked lamb.

After dinner was over he showed his visitors the empty trap-door spider's nest. It looked on the outside like any other patch of dried mud; but inside of the mud the deft spider had bored

a very deep tunnel, as large around as Mr. Amabel's finger. This tunnel, lined with a soft gray web, like woven silk, formed the spider's nest where it laid its eggs.

Julius was instructing the others how the lid of this nest would go "flap, flap" on its silken hinges, when they were all startled by a sudden gust of wind which shook the windmill.

Mr. Amabel's ruddy countenance paled to a mottled pink, and he remarked uneasily to Kirke and Paul,

"I don't like the sound of that, boys! If the wind is coming up again from that quarter it'll beat the fire toward us. I must make a fire-break between the house and the cañon and be quick about it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRE-BREAK

"CAN'T we help you, Mr. Amabel?" cried Kirke, always ready for action.

"Yes, I shall be glad of your help. I want to plough a strip of land next the house and another strip next the cañon, and burn the stubble between 'em, before this fire gets along."

The last sentence found Mr. Amabel and the boys half way to the barn.

"Kirke, you and Paul can hitch up the mules while I'm dragging out the plough."

"Certainly, Mr. Amabel," responded Kirke, springing to do his host's bidding.

"Ho my brother Kirke isn't scared of mules, Julie," boasted Boy Donald, pleasantly excited by what he had seen and heard. "He'd just as

lief have mules kick if they want to, my brother Kirke would."

The little champion was wildly happy. To be making ready for a runaway fire seemed to him the most delightful thing in the world.

It was quite otherwise with Julius. "My bruvver George isn't scared of mules either,—not much scared, I mean," he began bravely, but ended, with a loud sob. "O Donny, do you s'pect that fire'll come and burn us all up? Do you truly, Donny?"

"No indeedy, Julie. Kirke won't let it. Don't you see they're beginning to stop it?"

While the little boys were chattering the mules had been harnessed to the plough and taken to the corner of the garden near the house.

"Drive straight ahead to the orchard, Kirke," ordered Mr. Amabel who held the plough himself.

Kirke slapped the reins, and the mules plodded off through the barley stubble, leaving

a brown furrow behind them. Having reached the orchard fence they turned about and plodded backward, leaving a second furrow close beside the first. Thus they kept on going to and fro, till they had connected the garden and orchard by a broad belt of ploughed ground.

"There, that'll do for this piece," panted Mr. Amabel, and leaned against the plough-handle to rest. It had not been easy to cut through the tough dry sod, and he was glad to refresh himself with a glass of the lemonade brought out at this moment by watchful Mrs. Amabel.

"You look sick, Rufus," she said anxiously as she took his empty tumbler.

"My back hurts again," he admitted with some reluctance; "but I guess I can manage to plough that other strip."

"I think I can do it, Mr. Amabel. Please let me try," cried Paul, who had been chiefly engaged during the last hour in preventing the children from being run over.

"I'm afraid you ain't strong enough," objected Mr. Amabel.

But in the end Paul had his way, and guided several rather crooked furrows along the edge of the barley next the cañon.

The great field of stubble, having now been surrounded by ploughed land, could be burned over without much danger of the flames extending further.

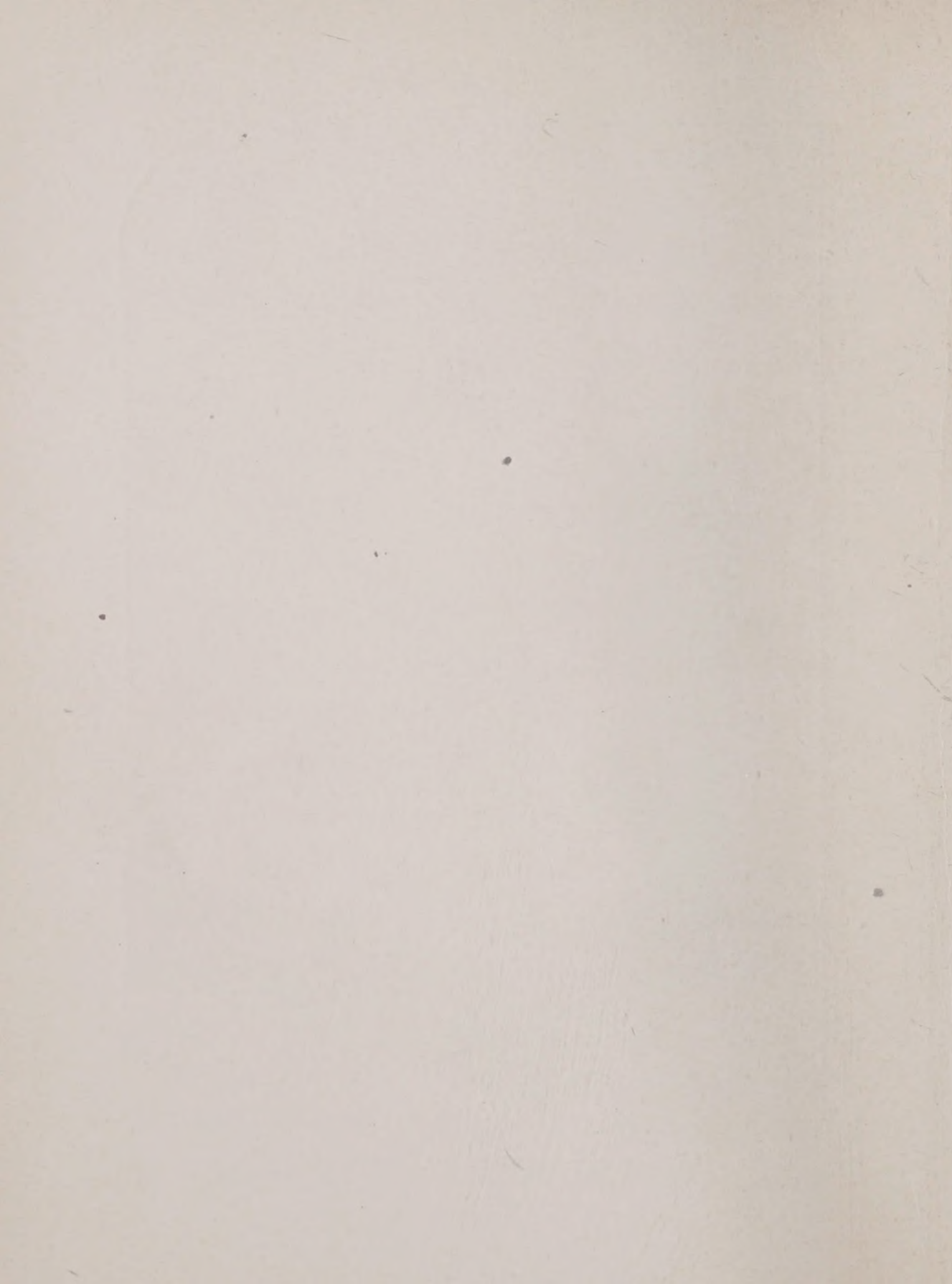
No sooner had the mules been led away to the stable than Mr. Amabel lighted a match and set fire to the short, crisp straw at the lower end of the field.

"Look, see the fire go creep, creep," cried Boy Donald, hopping up and down in high glee, as the blaze, fanned by the breeze from the cañon, advanced toward the upper end of the enclosed space.

Before it could reach this, Mr. Amabel and his helpers were waiting near the house with shovels and brooms, with which to beat out the



"Look, see the fire go creep, creep."



flame in case it should leap the belt of ploughed ground.

But the flame did not cross the upturned sod. It stayed in the field, and danced itself to death among the stalks of barley.

When the glowing plain had blackened to a cinder, Mr. Amabel said with a sigh of relief,

“ We’ve done a good job today, boys. We couldn’t ask for a better fire-break than this we’ve made. Paul, you helped me out well at the plough.”

“ My brother Kirke drove the mules, Mr. Amabel. Didn’t my brother Kirke drive nice? ” Boy Donald hastened to say.

“ To be sure, my little man. Kirke drove like a major. But come, it’s getting late. Let’s go in and see what my folks have got for supper.”

It was an excellent supper, and notwithstanding his aching back Mr. Amabel ate with enjoyment.

"The wind had changed to the south," he observed in a satisfied tone, and if it stayed in that direction, would drive the cañon-fire away from them instead of toward them.

He even indulged in a few jokes during the meal, and rose from table with the remark that he guessed they wouldn't be routed out that night by fire-bells. He guessed they'd been more scared than hurt.

"Though I ain't sorry we ploughed," he added, running his fingers through his hair. "It's best to be on the safe side."

Seeing the little boys already nodding, Kirke made haste to conduct them to their bedroom, which was next that of the Amabels, and opened from the kitchen.

Boy Donald was not pleased with this kitchen bedroom.

"I don't want to sleep in here, Kirke," he muttered, the moment he entered it. "It is so homely."

"Hush, Don," whispered Kirke, beginning to unlace the child's boot. "Mrs. Amabel will hear, and think you're very rude."

But Donald had still another grievance.

"I want you to sleep with me, Kirke," he whimpered, coming out with the whole story. "I don't want you to go 'way, 'way off!"

"Sleep with you in that narrow little bed, Don! The idea! Why, the bed is hardly large enough for you and Julius."

"Please sleep with me, Kirke! I'll lie just as thin!"

"Nonsense, little brother. It's no use teasing, I must sleep in the hall bedroom with Paul, and you must sleep here with Julius."

"He shan't! I won't let Donny sleep wiv me!" piped up slighted Julius, who had listened with growing indignation to the dialogue. "Donny isn't my twin any more. Donny shan't sleep in my bed!"

"O Julie. I am your twin. Yes, yes, I

am," exclaimed Boy Donald, in distress lest his little comrade should go off into a fit of the "grumps." "I'm your truly twin forever and ever."

"Of course, Julie. You and Don are just as twinny now as ever you were," said Kirke in a jolly tone; "and dear little chums to boot. Now into your nighties, both of you, and kiss me good night."

Being almost too drowsy for words, the children cuddled into bed without further protests; but as Kirke went away he heard Boy Donald call after him softly,

"Won't you leave your door open, Kirke? Please do."

After all the others had retired Mr. Amabel brought out the family pen and inkstand, and sat down at the dining-table to enter upon his account book the expenses incurred in his trip to the city.

"I ain't worried about fire as long as the

wind doesn't blow," he said to himself; "but I shall feel easier to take a look round the premises once in a while to-night. I guess I may as well keep my clothes on."

And to guard against slumber he worked diligently upon his accounts late into the small hours, till overcome by fatigue he fell fast asleep with the pen in his hand.

CHAPTER IX

FIGHTING FIRE

THAT night Kirke dreamed of being at his home in Silver Gate City. He fancied himself in the back yard, helping the gardener, as he had frequently done before, to make a bonfire of dry leaves and twigs raked from the lawn. Jingo, Captain Bradstreet's mischievous monkey, was frolicking about them, and as often as they set fire to the heap of brush would dash into the midst of it and scatter the blazing rubbish to the winds.

In his dream Kirke was so angry with the saucy creature that he shook him with all his might, and halloed to Paul across the street to come and take him away.

"Let go, Kirke, will you? What are you

shaking me for?" growled in reply, not the monkey but Paul Bradstreet himself, for Kirke had been laying violent hands upon his sleeping bedfellow.

"Let go, I tell you!" repeated Paul crossly. "You needn't choke a fellow if you *do* have the nightmare!"

Kirke rubbed open his eyes and sat upright. What was it that he saw through the window at the foot of the bed? Was it a bonfire? Was he still dreaming?

Alas no! Real flames were creeping around the veranda post opposite him. A strange lurid glare flooded the room.

Kirke leaped to the floor wide awake in an instant.

"Fire! Fire!" he vociferated, "the house is on fire!"

Seizing the ewer from the washstand, he ran with it through the hall to the veranda.

Once outside the house he could see the spot

upon the roof where the blaze had first started. Probably a spark had been wafted thither from the fire which the lad now plainly heard crackling in the cañon below. The fire-break had checked the flames from running along the ground, but what could have prevented them from flying through the air, now that the wind was again blowing fiercely.

Kirke dashed the water from his ewer as high as he could, and succeeded in deluging a few tongues of fire that were lapping the sweet faces of the roses. Then all of a shiver he darted back to his room and called to Paul half-dressed in the doorway,

“The roof is blazing like mad! Wake Mr. Amabel, can’t you, while I slip on my clothes?”

“Here I am, boys!” roared the farmer, running around the front of the veranda, with a ladder on his shoulder. “Fetch some water *quick!*”

Mr. Amabel had not been in bed that night,

and had sprung from his chair at Paul's first outcry.

"I've routed my folks," he called out from half way up the ladder. "They're at the pump, filling the buckets."

"Shan't I bring the force pump, Mr. Amabel?" screamed Kirke rushing off.

"No, the force pump's busted. Fetch along a broom."

"Here's a broom!" shrieked Kirke now partially dressed.

Mr. Amabel caught the broom in mid air, and shouted,

"Fetch me the blankets you'll find in a tub on the porch."

"Shan't I wake the kids first? The kids, Mr. Amabel?"

"Not yet, they're better off where they are. The fire's nowheres nigh 'em."

In a twinkling Kirke was back with the dripping blankets and helping his nervous host

to spread them over the already blistering shingles of the roof.

“If we can keep these woolen sheets sopping wet we may make out to smother the blaze,” wheezed Mr. Amabel, stamping upon a flame escaping from beneath them.

“Paul, hand me that bucket.”

Paul had come with two pailfuls of water, and Kirke flashed down the ladder for two more.

Mrs. Amabel meanwhile was pumping for dear life, filling tubs as fast as the lads could empty them. And presently Mr. Amabel himself joined the ranks, and there were three water-carriers, with four buckets, one kettle and a wash-boiler at their service.

Under the combined efforts of the four workers the fire hissed and died down.

“We’re drowning it!” yelled Kirke. “Hurrah! We’re drowning it. We’ll soon kill it dead!”

"If it doesn't kill us first," gasped Paul, staggering toward the house with the heavy wash-boiler. "But I thought one while—"

"Timothy Moses!" he ejaculated, interrupting himself, "The thing has broken out again! Higher up too!"

This was the sober truth. While they worked the fire had been creeping along inside the rafters, out of reach.

"Forever more!" exclaimed Kirke, catching sight of a truant flame upon the ridge pole. "The kids! We must wake the kids!"

"Yes, yes, boys, bring out the youngsters! The furniture! Everything you can get hold of!" cried Mr. Amabel in a whirlwind of agitation. "This building is bound to go!"

The lads did not hear him. They were entering the kitchen by the rear of the cottage, which was as yet untouched by the fire.

"Paul, you take Julie! I'll look out for

Don!" said Kirke, throwing open the door of the children's room.

And they went in, pursued by wreaths of smoke. Alone upon the bed lay little Julius fast asleep. Catching him up in the coverlet Paul carried him out of doors, and as he went heard Don screaming in the dim distance,

"Kirke, O Kirke, where are you? The smoke smarts my eyes. I can't see! Why don't you say something, Kirke? Are you burning afire?"

Kirke found bewildered Boy Donald stumbling about the stifling hall and sobbing with all his little might. Without a word he gathered the trembling child in his arms and bore him out through the smoky kitchen, while Donald clung to his neck, wailing,

"O Kirke, I couldn't find you *anywhere*! I s'pected you was burning afire!"

"Well you see I'm not burning, sweetheart! Hush, hush, Boysie, don't cry so."



He gathered the trembling child in his arms and bore him out through the smoky kitchen.

"O, don't go away again and leave me, Kirke. Please, please don't!"

"Leave you, Don? Why, I wouldn't leave you to-night for a thousand dollars," answered Kirke, almost sobbing himself.

What if his loving little brother had wandered a little farther in pursuit of him and been overcome by the smoke? Kirke dared not dwell on the thought.

"I'm going to wrap you up warm, Don, and put you down here by Julie where the fire can't get to you," he continued, hurrying with his precious burden to the live oak in the yard. "You won't stir from this place; will you?"

"Will you stay with me, Kirke?"

"I can't, Don. I must help move things out of the house."

"I want to help too."

"Oh no, Boysie, you're too little."

"But you said, Kirke, you wouldn't leave me any more!"

"I shan't go out of sight, Don. Sit here by Julie, and you can watch me every minute."

Don obeyed.

"I won't stir, Kirke, I won't move a single speck."

And away flew Don's hero to assist the others in saving furniture and in warding off the fire from the barn and windmill.

During the next half hour the four accomplished wonders. Before the blazing roof fell in they had taken from the house the greater part of its contents and piled them under the tree around the little boys.

The first thing removed was the owl in its cage; the last the large kitchen range. This range was heavy and awkward to lift, and in his desire to spare the strength of his aids Mr. Amabel overtasked himself and injured his lame back.

"I'm afraid, boys, I've gone the length of

my chain!" he groaned, sinking down in the yard beside the rescued stove. "I shall have to depend upon you to-day to keep things humming."

"O we'll work, Mr. Amabel," responded Kirke briskly. "But the bees will do the humming! Hear 'em, how they buzz!"

The sun was just rising, and the little winged insects could be seen swarming about their hives in much distress at all this unwonted noise and confusion.

"Yes, Mr. Fay's bees are alive. I'm glad of that anyway," said Mr. Amabel, wincing at a sharp pain in his back. "If the barn had gone we couldn't have saved 'em. And five or six hundred swarms of bees would have been no fool of a loss."

"O things might have been worse with us," sighed Mrs. Amabel. "I'm sure we ought to be thankful that the stock and barn ain't burnt."

She had hardly spoken these words when Boy Donald was heard to shout in a high, quavering voice,

“It’s a-burning now! Don’t you see, Mrs. Amabel? The barn is a-burning!”

CHAPTER X

TWO BRAVE LADS

IF Mrs. Amabel had not spoken of the barn Boy Donald would not have glanced at it and espied the tiny blaze upon its eaves. And on seeing the blaze if he had not screamed Kirke could not have put it out before it got beyond control. And if Kirke had not been a fine gymnast he could not have put it out at all.

But Kirke was remarkably agile. He did what none of his companions would have dared attempt. He climbed the tall sycamore by the windmill, ran out on a branch that drooped over the barn and swung himself down on the roof. Having done this he easily stamped out the fire.

Thus you perceive it was he and Boy Donald

who saved the barn, though to be sure Donald took no credit to himself, but boasted for days of his wonderful brother.

When Kirke reached the earth again after putting out the fire, everybody was loud in his praise, especially his grateful host and hostess.

“I don’t know what we should have done without you, Master Kirke,” said Mrs. Amabel, placing a pillow under her husband’s head. “You’ve been the greatest help and comfort to us,—you and Master Paul.”

“*I* wanted to help too, Mrs. Amabel,” spoke up Boy Donald, eager to be commended. “*I* wanted to help, but Kirke—”

Donald paused abruptly. On second thought he would not say his brother wouldn’t let him, he would not seem to blame his beloved hero.

Mr. Amabel glanced at Kirke with a sly smile.

“What little man saw that barn afire and

put us up to saving it? Don't you call *that* helping?"

Boy Donald gave a little purr of satisfaction and smiled all over his face.

"Well, I seem to be kind of laid up," went on Mr. Amabel. "We shall miss Manuel about the milking, that's a fact! But I guess my folks can manage it; they've milked before now."

"O, Paul and I would be ashamed to let Mrs. Amabel do the milking while *we* are here; wouldn't we, Paul?" said Kirke gallantly.

"Indeed we would," responded Paul.

"Know how to milk, either of you?" asked Mr. Amabel quietly.

"No, but we can learn," answered Paul with easy assurance. "I always wanted to learn."

"Not on my cows, I guess!" Mr. Amabel's lips twitched at the corners. "It wouldn't pay you to try it. But there's enough else to do, now I'm in this fix."

"I'm thinking we shall all feel better for something hot to drink," observed Mrs. Amabel, who, after searching for the coffee had at last found it in the churn.

"I can make the coffee, Mrs. Amabel. I learned how at the cooking-class at school," exclaimed Kirke, raking together some embers left from the burning house, of which the chimneys alone were standing.

"Paul and I will get breakfast while you're milking," he added, fishing the tea-kettle out of the clothes-basket, and looking around for the water pail.

"You mean we'll get breakfast if we can find the provisions to get it with," remarked Paul drily, after Mrs. Amabel had set out for the pasture with a milk pail dangling from either arm. "Has anybody seen anything of the butter-jar?"

"It's under the feather bed there; the clock is on top of it."

"And here's Mrs. Amabel's bread-chest, Kirke. I found it my own self," cried Boy Donald, pushing aside a salted codfish and Mrs. Amabel's best bonnet in order to display his prize.

"And *I've* found some honey, *I* have," boasted Julius, not to be left behind in rum-maging.

"Only the plate is wrong side out," he continued sorrowfully; "and the honey is a-running into the soap."

"Never mind a little thing like that Fay Junior," laughed Kirke. "Honey isn't very filling. What we want is something heartier."

"I agree with you," said Paul, "we're as hollow as nutshells."

"I remember fetching out a basket of eggs a few minutes ago," said Mr. Amabel, who still lay on the ground with his head on a pillow. "Where could I have dropped 'em?"

"Dropped eggs! You've given me a bright

idea, Mr. Amabel. We'll have dropped eggs on toast," exclaimed Paul, and went peering about the heap of household goods till he discovered the missing egg-basket on the sewing-machine making friends with the owl cage.

By the time Mrs. Amabel returned with the milk Paul and the two small lads had set the table with whatever dishes came first, and Kirke had prepared the coffee and toast.

The sight of the steaming breakfast was very pleasing to their tired hostess.

"The land! If you boys haven't done well," she ejaculated, as she washed her hands at the pump.

"Now I wonder if we can't help Rufus to the lounge there by the table, so he can eat with us?"

"I can help myself some. But don't you be scared at my hollerin'," said Mr. Amabel, well suited with this suggestion. And, aided

considerably by his wife and the older lads, he hobbled over to the couch.

Boy Donald placed his own chair at table between that of his little chum and that of Kirke, remarking that it was "nice to eat out doors; 'twas just like a picnic."

He and Julius were in high spirits, for had they not furnished their share of the repast by dragging to light some cookies that had been hidden in a tin box under a heap of carpeting?

"Yes, Don, it's nice to eat out of doors when you can eat in a house made of a tree," returned Kirke, with an admiring glance at the green foliage above them. "If we only had a roof over these branches we could make Mr. Amabel quite comfortable to-night."

"How I wish we had our tent here," said Paul, helping himself from a jar of fig pickles discovered in Mrs. Amabel's work-basket.

Kirke's eyes at that moment fell upon the

great parlor carpet which had concealed the cookies.

“Why not *make* a tent, Paul? Don’t you believe we can drag that carpet over the oak?”

“That’s a brilliant thought! I’m sure we can. We can drag it over the tree and tie the corners of it to stakes driven into the ground. What do *you* say, Mr. Amabel?”

“What do *I* say, Master Paul? I say you two boys do beat the Dutch for contriving,” replied the ranchman with enthusiasm. “I’ve been worrying to know what was going to become of me, spread out here as flat as a flounder; but I never once thought of having a room built round me!”

“You shall have it though, Mr. Amabel,” said Paul cheerily. “You can play that you’re a caterpillar, and that we spin your cocoon for you.”

“You see I’m wuss’n a caterpillar, Master Kirke; a caterpillar does its own spinning.”

“Not when it’s crushed, as you are, Mr. Amabel—”

“It plagues me I tell you, to have you boys bearing the heft of everything.”

“O, don’t be disturbed about our working too hard, Mr. Amabel,” interposed Paul. “Our muscles are tough; we haven’t played foot-ball for nothing.”

After breakfast he and Kirke tied ropes to the two corners of one end of the carpet, and climbing into the oak tree succeeded in drawing the great square of tapestry over its topmost branches.

Having done this they drove into the ground two rows of stakes, one on one side the tree, the other on the other side; and to these they fastened the edges of the carpet.

When they had finished, behold there was a snug enclosure made, with an opening at two ends, the front and the back.

Next, by piling up boxes, bureaus and other
L. of C.

articles they divided the inclosure into two rooms, each having its own door. The front room was to be the general dining-and-sitting-room; the other was to be a bedroom for Mr. and Mrs. Amabel.

"You haven't made any bedroom for Julie and me, Kirke," complained Boy Donald, who had been sharply observing what was going on.

"No, Don, because you and Julie will sleep in the wagon with Paul and me. We'll haul the wagon out of the barn and put it near this lovely tent!"

"O goody, goody!"

Donald was so completely overjoyed that he jumped up and down six times without stopping, and then pranced off astride a broomstick to carry the welcome news to Julius.

Soon after sunset Paul and Kirke wheeled the great wagon into the yard, and when they had tucked the children snugly away for the night sat down upon a laprobe on the grass and

sang to them. Or, to be quite accurate, Paul sang, while Kirke whistled his accompaniment. And this was the lullaby:

“The Rock-a-by Lady from Hushaby Street
Comes stealing, comes creeping;
The poppies they hang from her head to her feet,
And each hath a dream that is tiny and fleet,
She bringeth her poppies to you, my sweet,
When she findeth you sleeping.”

Before the song ended Boy Donald and Julie were both quiet in dreamland. And by nine o'clock that evening all was tranquil about the grounds where only yesterday had stood Mr. Fay's country residence known as Casa de Rosas.

CHAPTER XI

“THE BEAD ROAD”

THE next morning while Mrs. Amabel got breakfast and the little boys raked among the blackened ruins of the house for possible treasures, Paul and Kirke held a private council behind the barn.

The question for debate was this: What should they and Donald and Julie do with themselves during the coming week?

“I wish we could go to Eagle’s Crest to-day and wait there till Mr. Fay and the rest of them come,” said Kirke, whittling a bit of shingle as he talked. “We could if Manuel was here.”

“Yes, if wishes were horses then beggars might ride,” returned Paul, aiming a stone at

the ridge-pole of the barn and hitting the mark.

"But Manuel is not here and he won't be here for several days."

Kirke whistled.

"I don't see any sense in his staying away so long; do you Paul?"

"O the poor fellow is homesick for his mother, I suppose."

"And I'm homesick for a hotel," retorted Kirke, cleaning his finger nails with the sharpened point of the shingle. "Wouldn't it be nice to go to Eagle's Crest where things are sort of ship shape?—But there it's no use to think of it. We couldn't leave the Amabels alone in this plight."

"No, we couldn't. It would be meaner than dirt."

"O we must stay, Paul, there's no doubt about that. We must stay and take care of the live stock and keep the kids from under Mrs. Amabel's feet."

"Aren't the dear soul's feet whoppers though?" interjected Paul.

"Well, they ought to be, my boy. Aren't they her *sole* support?" laughed Kirke.

And, pleased with this essay at wit, the lad smoothed his ruffled brow and throwing down the shingle followed Paul to the "carpet house."

"Breakfast is all ready," called Boy Donald with a patch of smut on the end of his nose.

"But you're not ready, Buster," replied Kirke, with the smile which he usually wore for his little brother. "Come with me to the pump and have your face scrubbed,—you little colored boy."

"Julie is colored'er than I am," said Donald, pointing with great glee to his smutty twin just behind him.

"So he is. O what boys! I've a great mind to put you both to soak in a tub."

When Kirke presently came to the table,

leading the two shiny-faced children he at once told Mr. Amabel what Paul and he had been talking about.

"If you want us, Mr. Amabel," he said, "and if Mrs. Amabel can cook for so many, we'll stay and try to help you out of this scrape."

"Will you? I couldn't have asked it of you, but I do wish you would," returned the host, setting down his coffee cup with an air of satisfaction.

Mr. Amabel now reclined on his couch at meals, after the feasting custom of ancient peoples.

"My folks and I have been studying what's best to be done. What with my lameness and all, we're in a bad fix and no mistake. And if you could make yourselves easy to stop here in all this clutter till Manuel comes it would take a great load off our minds."

"Indeed it would," put in Mrs. Amabel, pass-

ing the gingerbread. "At first we thought we'd ask you boys to go back to Silver Gate City to tell Mr. Fay about the fire. And then it flashed over us that he's gone to Denver by this time, and what's the use to send? We shouldn't gain anything by it."

"Not a thing," said Paul. "'Twould only worry Mrs. Fay and Brenda,—No, we'd better stay here till Thursday just as if nothing had happened. Then we'll drive to Eagle's Crest that night and tell Mr. Fay the news."

"'Twill make him feel disagreeable when he comes to hear that the house is burnt to the ground," sighed Mr. Amabel; "but it isn't as bad as it would be if the building wasn't well insured."

"And old besides, father. You know Mr. Fay has been talking of building a new one come Spring," said cheerful Mrs. Amabel.

She and her willing helpers were busy nearly all day in setting to rights the "carpet tent."

Articles not in present use were carried outside, where in that rainless climate they would come to no harm; and by sundown the living-room looked quite home-like.

"I can tell you it isn't everybody that's rich enough to have walls hung with tapestry," said Kirke to Paul with an approving nod at the gay carpet overhead.

"Yes, and 'twas pretty shrewd in us to turn the flowery side of our roof inside," he added.

Tired from his labors the lad had extended himself in Mr. Amabel's great rocking chair, but readily made room for Donald beside him.

"Pretty shrewd in us, yes. What do you think of all this?" said Paul to Julius on his knee. "Don't you think our quarters are fit for a king?"

"Quarters?" echoed Julius looking about him expecting to see some twenty-five cent pieces. "Where are the quarters?"

Of course he was laughed at for this, and to relieve his embarrassment Kirke said.

"Paul is talking about our fine tent, Julie. Wouldn't an Indian be proud, though, if he could own a tent like ours?"

"I bet he would," responded Julius with a grin.

"Tell us a story about an Indian, Kirke," cried Boy Donald, snuggling close to his brother. "Please tell us a good long story."

"I'm afraid I can't tonight Don. I can't think of a single one."

"I will, then, Don. I'll tell a story about an Indian," said Paul obligingly.

"Oh how nice!" chuckled the little boys in chorus.

"Well, once upon a time in the Public Library at Silver Gate City I stumbled upon the tale of a monk. He—"

"A *monkey's tail*, hey?" interrupted mischievous Kirke. "Was it your Jingo?"

Paul silenced his comrade with a stray pillow, and continued,

"This monk lived in Peru among the Indians. He had lost a large sum of money and the Indian in the story was so sorry for him that he trudged off to a secret mine that nobody knew of except the Indians and brought the monk a bag full of silver.

"O, what a kind Indian," exclaimed Donald. "What did the monk say?"

"I suppose he must have said 'Thank you.' But it wasn't long before he asked the Indian for another bag of silver."

"That wasn't very polite! Did the Indian bring it to him?"

"Yes. And then the monk teased for a third bagful."

"Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full," hummed Kirke.

"And after that third bagful had been given him he begged to see the silver mine!"

“That monk ought to ha’ been ashamed of hisself!” cried Boy Donald, his blue eyes flashing. “That kind Indian! Did he show him the mine?”

“He did—and he didn’t! I’ll tell you; one dark night he and two other Indians went to the monk’s house and blindfolded him. Then they took turns in toting him on their shoulders till they came to the mine. They wouldn’t let him walk a step. They didn’t want him to know what path they took or how far they went.”

“’Course not,” said Julius.

“But when they set him down on the ground and stripped the bandage off his eyes he saw he was deep in the earth with silver ore on every side of him. The Indians told him to pick up all he wanted; and he crammed his pockets—if monks have pockets,—and his sleeves, and filled his hands besides.”

“He must have been pretty heavy by that time,” remarked Kirke.

"Yes, I don't know whether he could have walked home with such a load or not. He begged to try, but the Indians wouldn't let him. They took him up again to tote him. He knew why they did it."

"So do I," said Boy Donald.

"And he detetrmined to outwit them, and make a trail so he could find his way back to that mine. So what did he do but unfasten his rosary from his neck, and keep dropping beads off the string as they carried him along."

"Just as the little fairy story girl did, Julie, when the old witch was carrying *her* off," nodded Donald with approval.

"Only the little girl dropped peas, Donny," corrected Julius yawning.

"I remember," said Paul. "Well, the Indians left the monk at his house at last and there he lay awake in bed till daylight."

"I know why he wanted it to be light, Paul," explained Boy Donald. "He wanted it to be

light so he could see the bead road he had made."

"You're right, Don. But the monk never saw that bead road after all."

"Why not, Paul?"

"Because 'twas gone before he could even look for it. Early next morning the Indian knocked at his door and called out,

"I've brought back your beads, Father. You dropped them on the way."

"O dear, 'twas too bad to spoil the nice little bead road!"

"Yes, but the Indian had to do it, Don. He had no notion of giving away the secret of that mine. And he never brought the monk any more silver, you may be sure of that."

"Good! I'm glad of that, aren't you, Julie?" declared Donald very much in earnest.

"Orful glad. That monk was a selfish old fing!" returned Julius, winking very fast.

"So he was! You don't want to hear any

more about him; do you, Julie?" said Paul smiling. "No, I'm sure you'd rather listen to the bugles of dreamland."

And Paul hummed softly,

"Swiftly the dews of the gloaming are falling,
Faintly the bugles of Dreamland are calling."

CHAPTER XII

THE MONKEY-FACED OWL

WITH Mr. Amabel still so disabled, lying almost helpless on the lounge, and Manuel Carrillo away, Paul and Kirke were obliged to keep at work about the ranch from morning till night.

- When the cows and mules had been fed and watered, there yet remained Mr. Fay's two horses to be groomed and served their daily rations of barley-heads and hay. "This span made extra trouble," Mr. Amabel said. Besides there were the garden and the orchard to irrigate.

The boys were not used to such steady work. Each day brought new duties; and as Kirke privately remarked one afternoon to Paul,

"If we have a moment's leisure we are sure to find Mrs. Amabel's water buckets empty."

Not that Mrs. Amabel ever asked or even desired the lads to fill these for her; but they had been gallant enough to assume the task of furnishing the household supply of both wood and water.

"I don't mind the working, Paul," Kirke continued, as he and his comrade gathered guavas for the tea table. "What I mind is having no time to ourselves. I'd like to tramp among the hills; wouldn't you? I want to see the country. I'm just longing to rush off and explore."

Boy Donald chanced to overhear the last sentence; and laying it away in his memory after his childish fashion, said to Kirke next morning as they left the breakfast table,

"Me and Julie want to *explode*; may we, Kirke?"

“You want to do what, Don?”

Puzzled Kirke had quite forgotten his own remark of yesterday about *exploring*.

“Why we want to explode—we want to go and see the country.”

“Haw! Haw! Let the little fellows ‘explode’ if they’ve set their hearts on it. ’Twill do ’em good,” chuckled Mr. Amabel.

He was lying as usual on the lounge; and his wife had spread across his breast a sheet of tangle-foot fly-paper to entrap the flies that swarmed about him. His back was less painful today than usual, and he felt in excellent spirits.

“May we, Kirke?” persisted Boy Donald, following his brother to the front of the carpet tent, known as the front door. “Julie and me haven’t any place to play.”

“Why, I thought you had all out doors, Don!”

“No, we haven’t, not now. You won’t let

us play in the ashes any more. O, 'twas such bee-you-ti-ful fun to play in the ashes!"

"And to get beau-ti-fully black like two young crows. Yes, I dare say it was; but I can't have you raking among cinders and spoiling your clothes. Why don't you play 'horse' over there beyond the bee-hives?"

"O, we're scared to, Kirke, 'cause the bees might get angry at us and chase us."

"And we can't watch the owl wink," said Julie, "'cause he has flowed away."

This was a trial to the little boys. One of the bars of the cage had been cracked at the time of the fire, and the owl had managed to force it in two and make his escape.

"Let the little midgets have the run of the great barley field, Master Kirke, *I* would," called Mr. Amabel from his lounge. "There's a wire fence all around it, and as long as they stay inside that fence they can't come to any harm."

"Can we see the whole of the field, from here, Mr. Amabel?"

"Every acre of it. And there isn't a well or a hole in it."

The field referred to was not the one which had been ploughed for a firebreak the previous week. It lay on the other side of the ranch, and was separated from the cañon by a large pasture, in which the cattle were feeding.

"Please let us go, Kirke, O please let us go," entreated Boy Donald, making quick little leaps about his hero.

Julius meanwhile never opened his lips. He had crept under the table some minutes before, in what his sister Brenda called "a fit of the grumps." The attack had been brought on in this case by Kirke's begging him not to get under Mrs. Amable's feet while she washed the dishes.

"If I'll let you go, Don, will you promise to stay in the field?" asked Kirke, smiling down

upon the child's beseeching face, framed with short golden ringlets. "Will you promise not to crawl under the fence?"

"Yes, O yes."

"Well, give me a kiss then, and off with you. Maybe Mrs. Amabel will let you take along a few cookies to keep you from starving between now and dinner time."

Kirke had no sooner left the tent than sullen little Julius came out of his hiding-place. Mrs. Amabel was putting some cookies into a pretty little basket.

"Be sure to start for home the moment you hear me blow the horn," she said, handing the basket to Julius. "And don't forget to fetch this back with you."

"Yes, we will," replied Julius, answering the first question.

"No, we won't, Mrs. Amabel," said Donald, answering the second one.

And the little boys skipped away with the

basket swinging between them. In another moment they had squeezed through the bars of the barley field and were prancing in the stubble like two gay young colts. To be alone together on a great brown plain with purple mountains around them, and the blue sky over their heads, made them feel shivery at first; but the flutter of a bird's wings in the distance drove away the shivers.

"See that bird, Julie. S'pose it's a gull?" exclaimed Boy Donald, without a doubt that sea-gulls could be found as far inland as Casa de Rosas ranch.

"Maybe it's Mrs. Amabel's owl," suggested Julius. "Wouldn't it be nice if he'd come down into that tree there and let us catch him?"

"Gee! Wouldn't it though? We'd carry him home and s'prise Mrs. Amabel."

The tree was a long way ahead, and the bird high in the air; but what difference did that

make to the hopeful, excited children? They ran forward with all speed till they actually saw the bird swoop down from the sky and disappear into the thick foliage of the oak.

"He's going to rest hisself," cried Julius, by this time nearly out of breath. "Let's stop and eat, Donny."

"Yes, so we will," responded Boy Donald, lifting the cover of the little basket. "I'm glad Mrs. Amabel gave us these cookies. Wasn't Kirke good to ask her?"

"I don't know," growled Julie, with a return of "the grumps."

And he drew out a cookie and began to make snappish little bites around the rim of it.

"My Kirke is awful good, Julie. He's the goodest boy there is!"

"No, he isn't, Donny. I don't think Kirke is good at-a-ll!"

"Why-ee! Why, Julie Fay!" ejaculated Boy Donald in angry surprise.

“Telled me not to get under Mrs. Amabel’s feet,” continued resentful Julius. “’S if I would! What did Kirke s’pose I wanted to get under Mrs. Amabel’s feet for?”

Donald could not answer this question. He could only repeat in a higher key, “My Kirke is the goodest boy there is, so now, Julie Fay. You’re a naughty boy to say he isn’t, and I don’t like you any more.”

And without deigning a glance at his erring little comrade, Kirke’s young champion skipped on toward the tree.

CHAPTER XIII

IN AN OAK TREE

“O DEAR, Donny doesn’t like me any more, and we’re twins too!” muttered Julius plucking spitefully at the short barley stubble in which he was sitting.

Then as he gazed after Donald, swinging the basket in his hand,

“And O dear, dear, he’ll eat the cookies all up!”

The sight of that little basket brought Julius out of the “grumps” in hot haste; for how could he afford to lose Donny’s friendship and the cookies besides?

Jumping up from the ground he hurried to overtake his chum, and murmured with eyes cast down,

"I like *you*, Donny."

"I don't care, I don't like *you*, Julie Fay," cried wounded Donald running on, "'cause you don't think my Kirke is good at all!"

"O yes, I do, Donny."

"*How* good, Julie?"

"O just a *little* good."

"H'm! My brother Kirke's *gooder'n* that!"

Boy Donald ran on all the faster, winking to keep back the tears.

"Well, I'll say he's *pretty* good, Donny," puffed Julius far behind.

"Kirke is *gooder* than *pretty* good," persisted the devoted brother.

"Well then, I'll say he's good *enough!*" returned Julius, rather crossly it must be confessed.

Nevertheless he had acknowledged that Kirke was "good enough," and Boy Donald was satisfied. He not only waited for Julius to

catch up with him but held out a cookie, saying in a pacific tone,

“There, take that, Julie, and stop behaving!”

The little boys soon reached the oak into which the bird had disappeared. They expected at any moment to hear the rustling of wings; though the truth was that the hawk had flown away long ago.

“We can’t see the owl, ’cause the tree is so thick with leaves,” complained Julius.

“I guess the bird is sitting on its nest,” said Donald. “Hist! Don’t make a bit of noise! I’m going up to look.”

“O Donny, do you dare to?”

“’Course I dare. This is a real easy tree.”

A tree easy to climb, Donald meant, and was correct in his opinion, for the oak had many branches springing from its trunk, and the lowest of these branches was quite near the ground.

Donald scrambled into the first crotch as nimbly as a squirrel, and thence to the second and third.

"It's lots of fun, Julie. You come too," he whispered down to his little friend; and mounted yet higher.

Clumsy little Julius, after several attempts, succeeded in reaching the lowest crotch of the tree; and then frightened half out of his wits, began to yell to Donald to help him down.

"I can't get down my own self," wailed Donald from a limb half way up the tree. "Everything keeps wiggling. O Julie, I'm going to tumble."

The poor child was dizzy, and did not know what to make of it. He had never been light-headed before in his life.

"Don't, Donny, don't tumble on *me!*" shrieked Julius in genuine alarm. "You'll tumble me down too. O dear! Kirke hadn't ought to let us come!"

"Kirke, O Kirke!" bawled Boy Donald at the top of his voice.

"Kirke, O Kirke!" echoed Julius

The children were answered by the distant tooting of Mrs. Amabel's dinner horn. From his lofty perch Donald caught a glimpse of the woman's tall figure standing by the bars; and shouted shrilly,

"Halloo, Mrs. Amabel! Halloo! Halloo!"

The shout could not have reached Mrs. Amabel's ears, for she turned and walked slowly back to the tent.

"I can't make anybody hear! They're going to sit down to the table without us!" howled Donald, half wild with despair. "O where is my Kirke?"

It was unlike brave little Donald to act in this way. Julius was dismayed, and cried more than once.

"Stop it, Donny. O please stop it!"

So long as he did not move about, Julius felt

quite safe in the low crotch of the tree where he sat. With Donald it was far otherwise; he was compelled to hold on to the high limb with all his might in order to keep himself from falling.

“ I *have* to cry, Julie,” he whined piteously. “ My arms do ache *so* bad! ”

“ I’m awful sorry. Can’t you *shin* down Donny? ” asked little Julius, who thought his twin spry enough to do almost anything.

“ No, I don’t dare to, Julie, ’cause things keep whirling round so.”

It was Donald’s head that was whirling. He rested it against the branch he held, shutting his eyes so tightly that he failed to see a mounted horse leap the bars at that moment and come galloping toward them across the field.

Julie was the first to see the horse and his rider, and exclaimed with a ringing shout.

“Kirke is coming a-horseback. Kirke is coming a-horseback!”

“He is? O where? O Kirke is the goodest boy there is!”

Donald raised his head; his giddiness was passing off; and Kirke had no sooner arrived at the oak tree than his little admirer jumped down into his arms without a question.

Then Kirke picked Julius out of the crotch of the tree and sat him in front of himself on the horse, and with Donald riding behind him went back to the house.

“How did you know we were in the tree, Kirke?” asked Donald, as they trotted carefully through the stubble. “Could you see us?”

“No, not a bit of you till I looked through papa’s field-glass.”

Kirke’s tone was so cheerful that the children did not suspect how anxious he had been.

“When I looked through the glass I saw you plainly enough and went after you in a hurry. Manuel lent me his horse. Manuel has just got home.”

“O has he? And shall you take us to Eagle’s Crest tomorrow?”

“I mean to, if I don’t lose you meanwhile,” said Kirke laughing.

“O there’s the owl now! Just see the owl up that other tree!” cried Donald.

“You’re right, you’re right, little brother. We’ll have him back in his cage in less than no time.”

The owl was caught; so it all ended well. And Kirke never told the little boys how he had felt them on his mind all that morning, and as he worked in the garden had cast many a glance at the barley field where they were playing; and how very anxious he had been when they disappeared from his sight.

CHAPTER XIV

EAGLE'S CREST

THE Amabels watched the departure of their young guests on Thursday morning with real regret. Manuel Carillo perceived that there were tears in Mrs. Amabel's eyes, though she only said brightly as she shook hands with one after another,

“Well, you may depend I'm dreadful sorry to have you go.”

The instant the four lads arrived in front of the hotel at Eagle's Crest little Miss Weezy ran out to the wagon to meet them, exclaiming,

“O boys, we've been looking and looking for you,—Brenda and I! We've been here two whole hours,—papa and mamma, and Mr. and

Mrs. Fay and all of us! And I've seen almost everybody there is in this house!"

In her glad excitement Weezy chattered so fast that she left the quartette no opportunity to tell their own startling tidings.

"There are lots and lots of little girls here, Donny," she went on, giving her small brother a hug and a kiss. "And we're going to have a barbecue and——"

"Barby Q. *Who?* What's the rest of her name?" interrupted Boy Donald, slipping from her embrace.

"How old is she?" cried Julie, no less interested than Donald in this supposed new comrade.

"Why, it isn't *she* at all!" declared little Miss Weezy with a merry laugh, echoed by Kirke and Paul. "Did you think the barbecue was a little girl? The idea! A barbecue is just a kind of party out doors, where they have a fire and roast things whole in a——"

"We've had a fire too, our own selves, Weezy," broke in Boy Donald, skipping behind his sister toward the piazza steps. "Mr. Fay's house is——"

"The landlord has sent a Mexican to hunt for a deer," rattled on Miss Weezy, unheeding. "And as soon as he shoots one we're going to have the barbecue and——"

"Hello, mamma," again interrupted Boy Donald, catching sight of his mother, the Fays and other home friends upon the piazza.

"O mamma, we've got an orful s'prize for Mr. Fay. His house is all burnt up, all but the chimneys!"

"My house burnt? Anybody hurt? Where's Julie?" cried Mr. Fay, rushing forward, his face as gray as ashes.

"Here I am, papa!"

Julie had hidden behind Paul for fun, and now threw himself into his father's arms with a joyful cry.

"Thank Heaven, whatever may have happened my little son is safe," ejaculated Mr. Fay, pressing the wondering child to his breast.

"Be quick, you older boys, tell me about the fire."

Before Paul or Kirke could speak a dozen words Mrs. Fay and Brenda appeared and began to smother Julius with kisses and to ply the older lads with eager questions. And very soon they were joined by the Rowses and Bradstreets, all desirous to express to Mr. Fay their sorrow for the late disaster.

Altogether there was much stir and excitement among the group in that corner of the veranda; and if Paul and Kirke had been less engrossed in what they were saying they must have perceived that they were regarded by the numerous guests of the hotel with considerable curiosity.

After listening to the boys' story Mr. Fay turned to Mrs. Fay with the remark, "This

accident will change our plans, Alice. We can't go home tomorrow. I must leave you and the children here at the hotel and drive to the ranch immediately to see Mr. Amabel."

As Mr. Fay finished speaking Juan Muchado, the man sent by the landlord in search of a deer, returned to the hotel empty-handed.

Little Miss Weezy knew that he had gone out two or three times before this without finding game of any sort, and she began to despair of the barbecue.

"O dear, to have Casa de Rosas burn all up, and not to have any barbecue either!"

"You don't feel so bad about Casa de Rosas as I do, you can't," murmured Brenda, with her handkerchief to her eyes. "O Frizzle Nig isn't it dreadful."

"Perfectly awful!" whispered Weezy, throwing her arms about her friend's neck and sobbing with her. "I tell you, Twisty Horn, I'm just as sorry for you as I can be!"

“Frizzle Nig” and “Twisty Horn” were their pet names for each other when talking confidentially; but they never said the words for any one else to hear.

The landlord had not given up the barbecue by any means. The hunter rode out again that night on horseback; and next morning at five o'clock the hotel was aroused by a loud shout.

Juan Muchado, the hunter, had killed a fine deer, so it was said, with horns six feet long.

Kirke ran to the door of the chamber where Molly and Weezy slept, and announced this welcome news through the keyhole.

“Then we can have the barbecue!” cried Weezy.

There was little more sleep in the hotel after that. Almost everybody was awake and astir.

Perhaps the person most excited by the bringing of the deer was Louis, the new servant. He was a mulatto, about the color of a

new bronze lamp, and called himself a "*chef*" (pronounced shef. Chef is the French name for a grand cook.)

He despised Chinamen, and had been longing to show the guests at the hotel that he knew how to manage a barbecue better than any other man in California. He wore an air of great importance that morning.

"Massa Graffam," said he to the landlord, "You can't 'spect me to do this 'thout right smart of wood! I mus' have two cords. Yes, sah,—two cords o' wood and bark, cook dis barbecue."

"Very well, have your own way; but where will you get the wood? We haven't so much as that in the shed. Can't you use coal?" asked the landlord just to tease him.

"*Coal?*" Louis's eyes looked ready to pop out of his head with disgust. "Coal, sah? Who ever heard of a fus' class barbecue made

out o' coal? No, sah! jes' you wait till after breakfast, sah, and lemme send out a team of hosses fotch dat wood."

"All right," said the landlord.

He was willing that his horses should work for the interest of the hotel; but as Mr. Amabel had remarked, he was never willing to lend them to outsiders.

Two hours later Julius and Boy Donald, who had been on the watch, saw Jake and Bill Smith, the hostlers, harnessing a four-horse team for the woods.

"Want to go along to see the trees cut down, little boys?" asked Jake, pleased with their bright faces. "We can make room for a lot of you young folks as well as not."

The delighted twins skipped away to tell Mr. Rowe, and came back immediately with Paul and Pauline Bradstreet, Kirke, Molly and Weezy Rowe and Weezy's friend, Brenda Fay.

CHAPTER XV

THE BARBECUE

THE drive to the woods was delightful, and the young people all took pleasure in watching the men, as they cut down a tall sycamore.

Donald and Julius mounted a log at a little distance from the rest of the party in order to obtain a better view.

"I don't see what Louis wants so much wood for," said Molly, "he is going to roast only one deer."

"But he will roast it whole," returned Kirke. "Of course that makes a great difference."

"So it does. And he'll build the fire out of doors, he says. Do you suppose he'll put the deer right on to the fire? I should think that would smoke it all up."

Kirke thought so too, but confessed that he did not know anything about it.

"It's lovely that we can watch this barbecue from the start," said Molly. "O, there's one thing I forgot to tell you. Mamma says Louis is willing we should look on and see him all the time he is barbecueing; but we mustn't bother him by asking questions, or he'll send us off."

"We'll be careful, we older ones," said little Miss Weezy with a grown-up air; "but I don't see what we can do with Donny and Julie, they talk so much."

"We'll tell them to keep still," replied Molly; but in her heart of hearts she thought Weezy was more of a chatterbox than either of them.

That afternoon a trench was dug near the hotel, and Kirke and Paul knew without asking questions that this must be meant for a fireplace.

"It looks like a grave," said Weezy. "It's long enough for two graves."

In fact when completed it was fourteen feet long, two feet wide and two feet deep.

Now a fire was built in it of the wood that had been brought. It was only Friday afternoon, and the feast would not come off till Saturday noon; but what Louis wanted was an unlimited supply of red hot coals.

A few of the hotel servants sat around the pit till midnight telling stories and singing, and now and then throwing in some fresh sticks of wood. After midnight other men took their places and tended the fire till nearly sunrise.

By nine o'clock that morning there was an enormous bed of glowing coals. Louis had risen very early and made broth of the deer's head and neck. This pot of broth he buried in the pit, perhaps in order to keep it hot.

The children looked on, but asked no questions.

Next they saw him wash some old iron pipes and engine wheels. "Them's my gridirons,"

he explained, and set them on the coals, where they took up exactly one half the room in the pit. He had cut the deer into four pieces.

"What a shame! I thought barbecues were roasted whole," whispered Weezy to Molly.

But it seemed that Louis had his own ideas of barbecues. He larded and floured and peppered the four pieces, and tossed them upon the greased gridirons.

The guests came out from the hotel presently, and thought him a picturesque figure in his white uniform of cap, jacket and apron, as he stood preparing the barbecue, surrounded by a group of admiring children.

"Well, Louis, how do you come on?" asked Mr. Rowe.

Louis touched his cap with a bow of the deepest respect.

"Fust rate, Boss," he replied, with a triumphant wave of his ladle, which was nothing

more nor less than a tin dipper tied to a rake handle. "I'se comin' on fus' rate."

Upon that he dipped the ladle into the pot of hot broth and basted the broiling meat.

"Mass' Graffam say this 'ere pit is just twicet too long. Guess he'll find out who knows best!"

Mr. Rowe measured it with his eye. "O, I see now why you made it so long, Louis. You want two beds of coals."

"Dat's so, Boss! Fust I brile de meat one side, den I turns it ober and briles tudder; and all de time I'se keepin' dem coals red and hot under de ashes."

"Do the children trouble you at all, Louis?"

"Not when dey don't come too near. I don't want 'em makin' a dust," said the cook, warning off the little boys with the rake handle.

The landlord appeared now, laughing and rubbing his hands.

"Well, well, I'll warrant these little folks never saw a barbecue before," said he, patting Donald's sunny head.

"How is it, Louis, won't there be meat enough for quite a large party? I want to invite the neighbors, and have a regular jollification."

"O ho, Massy, there'll be deer enough to go round. O ho, dere'll be deer enough," replied Louis, dipping his ladle into the broth and basting the meat again. "Las' time I make a barbecue 'twas down to Catalina Island, and there sich a power o' folks come to eat it! Lud-a-massy, you couldn't see de sky round de shore fer de folks!"

"Well, we'll have as big a crowd this time," said Mr. Graffam.

The truth was, he had already asked half the people at Eagle's Crest; and now he decided to send Jake and Bill to invite all the rest.

As he was walking off Louis called after him,

“Look a-here, Massa, dinner one o’clock sharp. Tell ’em not to forget it. Everybody’ll come.”

“O, I do like *jolly ’casions*,” said Boy Donald to Kirke in a joyous whisper. “Come, Julie!”

And he and his little chum wandered about, hand in hand; now admiring a redhammer, as it sipped water from the faucet in the corner, now going as near as they dared to the pit where Louis reigned supreme with his ladle for a sceptre.

“Well, here you be again,” said Louis gazing down upon his little visitors benevolently. “Massa Graffam done invit the hull *copperation*. Lud-a-massy! Hope dis ’ere deer’s legs hole out to go roun’!”

The landlord and two smiling maids came out of the back door of the hotel bringing the long dining-table, which they placed under the spreading black oak. The maids loaded the

table with plates of buttered rolls, buttered johnny-cake, doughnuts and cheese; but the little boys observed that there were no knives and forks.

The guests had begun to arrive; and at the stroke of one the gong sounded; and then such a rush and scramble for places! To be sure it was not a very large party,—perhaps fifty in all.

Still there were not chairs enough for the children, and many of the invited guests were expected to sit on logs or on the ground.

Everybody—even Donald and Julius—was given a large plate to hold. Louis, very neat and elegant in his white uniform, was master of ceremonies. With a deer's leg in one hand and a knife in the other, he went around cutting off slices to fill the plates.

In the midst of this performance he suddenly dropped both meat and knife, exclaiming,

“Lud-a-massy! Where dem taters? I done put 'em in de groun'.”

With two strides he reached the pit, raked out the potatoes roasted to a turn, and handed them about, amid cheers of laughter.

“This is really the best venison I ever saw,” said Mr. Rowe, nibbling a piece he held in his fingers. “Captain Bradstreet, did you ever in all your travels eat any that was finer?”

“Never, upon my word,” answered the captain, who sat next Mr. Rowe at table.

Louis heard this and was happy. When the guests had eaten nearly all they cared for he went about to one and another, saying coaxingly,

“Now, missus, now massa, try dis 'ere piece. Jis hole it in your fingers. 'Twon't stay dere long!—Now what I done tell ye;” he added with a chuckle as he saw the choice bits disappear.

It was a merry party. Everybody had a good time, but perhaps Julius and Donald best of all. And before the day ended Kirke was made happy by something to be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI

BOY DONALD AND HIS HERO

WHEN Mr. Fay returned to Eagle's Crest that afternoon the dinner party was over; but to the great joy of Louis the hot venison still "held out."

"Set ri' down to dis 'ere table, Sah," cried the beaming cook, beckoning the tardy guest to a vacant chair. "Right smart o' deer meat lef' in the pit. I glad I done roasted that las' basket o' taters."

"I hope I shan't eat the whole basketful, Louis," said Mr. Fay, accepting the seat with a smile. "I'm pretty hungry though, I confess."

"*We* helped to get the trees, papa, so Louis could cook the barbecue," announced little Julie, pressing close to his father's side.

"Indeed! Who is '*we*'?"

"O, me and Donny, and all of us. Only we couldn't chop down the trees, you know!"

"I dare say not!"

"'Cause they were so big, Mr. Fay," added Boy Donald, joining his twin. "'Sides, nobody didn't give us any ax."

Behind Donald came the other members of the Rowe family, also the Bradstreets; everyone eager to hear all that Mr. Fay could tell them about affairs at Casa de Rosas.

"We're glad to welcome you back to our party, Mr. Fay," was Mrs. Rowe's pleasant greeting, while the little group gathered around the table. "How did you leave Mr. Amabel?"

"Better, Mrs. Rowe, much better. I think he will soon be as well as ever.

"O, goody, goody!" cried Mr. Amabel's friends, Brenda and Weezy, clapping their hands.

"O, goody, goody!" echoed the little boys, clapping their own hands in chorus.

"Of course you found your furniture much damaged," remarked Mr. Rowe, pushing the pickle jar toward Mr. Fay.

"On the contrary it was damaged very little." Here Mr. Fay paused to take a luscious morsel of venison from Louis's extended fork. "And very little of it is missing. Paul and Kirke must have worked tremendously."

"O, Mr. Fay, you know Mr. Amabel helped," interposed Kirke modestly. "He helped as long as he could."

"Of course. But he got disabled soon after the fire was discovered; he told me that himself," replied Mr. Fay quietly.

Then turning to Mrs. Rowe,

"Mr. Amabel couldn't say enough in praise of your son, Madam, or in praise of Paul Bradstreet here. He said they were his right-hand men, 'captains' he called them. Everything,—barn, bee-hives, furniture,—would have gone

to destruction if it had not been for their coolness and courage."

"Why, Mr. Fay, this is all new to us. It pleases me exceedingly to hear it."

And Mrs. Rowe glanced proudly at Kirke who stood beside her, too embarrassed to meet her eye.

Paul at his friend's elbow looked equally uncomfortable. A stranger observing the two lads at that moment, might easily have suspected that far from having performed a noble action, they had done something of which they were ashamed.

"I knew I could trust you with the children, I was sure you would keep them always in mind," whispered Mrs. Rowe softly in her son's ear. "But such chivalry and valor as this! I never dreamed you were capable of it at your age! Your mother is proud of you, Kirke!"

Mr. Fay had laid down his knife and fork.

"I can't be too grateful to you boys," he

said, addressing Paul and Kirke with a quiver in his voice. "Mr. Amabel gives you the credit of having rescued Julie and Donald from the burning house. You never told us how plucky you were that night in fighting fire. I call you *real heroes*."

"Kirke was pluckier than I was, Mr. Fay," interposed Paul generously. "He saved the barn. I shouldn't have dared swing down from the sycamore as he did. If either of us was a hero it was Kirke!"

"Kirke is a *hero*, my Kirke is a *hero*," sang Donald, attracted by the musical word.

And he ran to throw his arms about his brother's neck.

"Kirke was always Donny's hero," remarked Molly to Pauline with a laugh.

"No more than Paul is mine," retorted Pauline, jealous for the honor of her beloved twin. "He is slow but he's sure. Three cheers for my steady old Paul!"

The cheers, uttered with a gusto, were still echoing over Eagle's Crest when Brenda Fay amused the company by proposing another three for her own brother. Though wee Julie had done nothing in the least heroic the coveted applause was not withheld.

As it died away, little Miss Weezy sprang nimbly into a chair, waving her pocket handkerchief and exclaiming,

"Now it's *my* brother's turn! Please shout a little louder, all of you!"

And in response to her appeal the willing group at her feet gave three rousing cheers and a tiger for

"Boy Donald and His Hero"!

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